Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

MUNSHI : SELF-SCULPTOR

JAYANA SHETH

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

K. M. Munshi, a known nationalist, statesman and educator, was also a leading litterateur of India who synthesized Eastern and Western literary influences, and became a typical Renaissance figure.

The paradoxes of Munshi's personality, harmonized by his realization of his *Svadharma*—personal duty to himself and his fellowmen —, governed Munshi's life and activities. His literary works and nationalistic creative programs manifested a process that may be termed self-sculpture.

Aptly entitled, MUNSHI : SELF-SCULPTOR envelops Munshi's life, ideology and art, and establishes his art as a projection of the other two. The study is extensive as it links different phases of Munshi's life, and intensive as it concentrates on the central force of his art — the dramatic art.

The translation and critical analysis of Munshi's historical play *Dhruvasvaminidevi* illustrates the kernel of Munshi's art. This book becomes the first comprehensive critical study in English on Munshi.

Cover design :— Panna Jain

Graphic presentation of the chart ("Introduction", p. XVII) depicting the paradox of Munshi's personality through eight opposing colors of the color spectrum. Munshi's *love-power* complex is indicated through monochrome tone used alternately in the inner circle.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

MUNSHI : SELF-SCULPTOR

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

MUNSHI : SELF-SCULPTOR

JAYANA SHETH

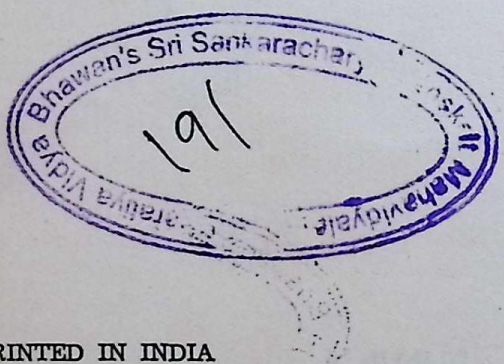
BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN
BOMBAY, INDIA

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

COPYRIGHT © *All Rights Reserved*

First Edition 1979

Price Rs. 65/-



PRINTED IN INDIA

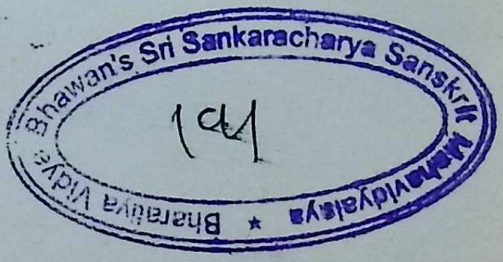
By V. Varadarajan at Associated Advertisers & Printers, 505, Tardeo, Arthur Road, Bombay-400 034, and Published by S. Ramakrishnan, Executive Secretary, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay-400 007, INDIA.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

To my husband Anil

With deepest love, I dedicate this book to you. Words fail to express gratitude for your participation in the conception to fruition of this book.

Your literary taste, knowledge and experience, editorial suggestions, critical comments—above all, your patience and perseverance make this book as much yours as mine.



Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Contents

To the Reader ix

Introduction xiii

Chapter I: An Overview of the Man and His Time .. 1

Chapter II: Munshi's Personal Background 23

Chapter III: Munshi's Craft and Purpose 31

Chapter IV: Munshi's Plays and His Contribution to Gujarati Drama 55

Chapter V: Critical Analysis of *Dhruvasvaminidevi* .. 89

Chapter VI: Complete Translation of *Dhruvasvaminidevi* from Gujarati .. 119

Appendix A: Munshi's Works 233

Appendix B: Dates and Events of Munshi's Life .. 239

Appendix C: Abbreviations 245

Bibliography 247

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

To The Reader

THE most common Third-World characteristics — the protest against oppression, political revolution for freedom, and the struggle for economic resurgence — are dovetailed by moral, aesthetic, and linguistic revolutions. Eminent literary writers capture the deeper moral issues with a dual purpose, conscious or subconscious, of reflecting subjective vision and effecting social regeneration. The process has a complex frame of reference that is often manifested in the writer's, and the nation's, search for identity. The conflict between the native traditions and foreign influences generates the need to harmonize the resultant paradoxes, and to establish their relevance to the writer's psyche as well as to the collective consciousness of the people. For the desired synthesis, the writer reverts to history, often to pre-history, and revitalizes the positive traditions for cultural regeneration.

This study focuses on the kernel of Munshi's art: the story teller's talent at dramatizing an episode from India's past for the dual purpose of self-projection and social regeneration. According to me, Munshi's only historical play *Dhruvasvaminidevi,* exemplifying the most positive and least negative

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

aspects of Munshi's talent, also manifests the core of Munshi's art. It dramatizes an episode from the illustrious history of the Guptas and seems to rationalize Munshi's personal experience, his untraditional second marriage. The play idealizes Chandragupta II of the fourth century A.D., popularly known as king Vikramaditya, providing a heroic national model for Munshi's contemporary society. But Chandragupta II, besides embodying the ideal of Aryan culture, also reflects Munshi himself. The idealistic Gupta prince is an unconscious amoralist and a shrewd politician, like Munshi. Dhruvadevi is Munshi's typical independent female character ready to flout social norms for self-fulfilment. She also resembles Munshi's wife Lilavati who, like Dhruvadevi, was a widow before her second marriage, in a society where widow remarriage was a social taboo.

Any of Munshi's literary works reflects his talent as a dramatist, novelist, and his dual—personal and public—motivations in an unpredictable admixture. Munshi's works seem to defy a critic's attempt to build any recognizable pattern in the mingling of such traits. For example, the paradoxical projections of contemporary traditions, or the fascination and hatred for both the Eastern and Western values in Munshi's works have perplexed many. It intrigued me as to why Munshi, essentially a dramatic genius, practically abandoned the form of drama for that of the novel around 1947. Again, why did this dramatist, though preoccupied with history and its research, wrote only one historical play out of the total of fifteen. Since self-projection was the central force of Munshi's works, I noticed that unless the man glossed the artist, Munshi's art would always remain an enigma. *Dhruvasvaminidevi* represents the essential Munshi, the man and the artist.

To correlate the man and the artist in Munshi, I have examined pertinent phases of Munshi's ideology, activity, and life in the first two chapters. A survey of Munshi's craft, purpose, and contribution to Gujarati literature is given in the third chapter. The fourth chapter focuses on Munshi's contribution to Gujarati drama and theater, and offers an analysis of each of Munshi's plays in relation to his personality, ideology, and art. Chapter five gives a summary and critical analysis of *Dhruvasvaminidevi,* substantiating my contentions on Munshi's art. Chapter six offers my translation of the entire play—the first

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

English translation—for the reader to appreciate the most representative of Munshi's works. Appendix A enumerates Munshi's writings, and Appendix B lists dates and events of Munshi's life, giving a comprehensive view of his activities. The titles of Munshi's plays and novels, frequently referred to in this book, are abbreviated as per the list appearing as Appendix C.

I have literally translated the play, retaining the spirit of the original, and have not aimed at mere readability of the text. All excerpts from the non-English sources, those of Munshi as well as other scholars, quoted in this book have been translated by me.

I have used the American spelling, and have avoided using the diacritical marks for Sanskrit words.

For the criticism and encouragement that guided me in writing this book, I wish to thank Professors Alex Wayman, Ainslie Embree, Barbara Miller, and Theodore Riccardi, Jr.

My thanks are also due to Mr. Shantilal Tolat, Hon. Publications Manager of the Bhavan, for carefully seeing this publication through the Press. Mr. Panna Jain has obliged me by designing the cover.

I am thankful to the American Institute of Indian Studies, Chicago, for awarding me the Senior Research Fellowship to visit India to scrutinize unpublished notes and letters of Munshi and gather current critical observations of eminent scholars in India on Munshi. This project has enabled me to update my interpretations included in the book.

I present this book to the lovers of literature in and out of India. The Western indologist, who knows Munshi primarily as a founder of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan and a statesman, should be able to recognize the litterateur Munshi through this study.

Baruch College:
City University of New York

JAYANA SHETH

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Introduction

Dr. K. M. MUNSHI (1887-1971) represented the spirit of India's national awakening, often known as the Indian Renaissance.[1] Munshi's activities had several dimensions as was typical of many a nationalist of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century India. He emerged as a politician, statesman, lawyer, journalist, historian, and educator, but he manifested his total self in his literary writings. His individualism and untraditionalism were combined with his urge for revitalization of Indian culture. And he tried to establish the regenerating process within the context of India's ancient heritage. His contribution to the advancement of Indian culture made him a 'man of the era.'

[1] The influence of Western education and culture caused several changes in the life-style and thinking of Indians. Leonard Gordon and Barbara Miller say, "Some consider ferment a Renaissance, e.g. Bengal Renaissance in the nineteenth century". *A Syllabus of Indian Civilization* (New York : Columbia University Press, 1971), p. 100. S.N. Hay entitles reformist religious activities "The Renascence of Hinduism" in *The Sources of Indian Tradition* ed., Wm. Theodore de Bary, et al, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), p. 602. R. C. Majumdar entitles Vols IX and X of *The History and Culture of the Indian People* as "British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance" (Bombay : Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1965).

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

The unremitting toil of the dynamic representative of the Indian Renaissance and nationalism, the creative art of revolutionary litterateur, and his consequent contribution to the general heritage of India demand a critically judicious evaluation.

A host of scholars in Gujarati have made innumerable comments on Munshi. Some have called him a 'genius,' others, an 'iconoclast,' or a 'perpetual adolescent.' Some have described him as an 'embodiment of Indian culture,' and others have admitted that it is 'impossible to evaluate Munshi.' To project the total image of Munshi's complex personality may be considered a 'stupendous task,' it is said.

The Indian Renaissance in the nineteenth century molded Munshi's personality, reflecting the inherent paradoxes of the time. The intellectual stalwarts of this age endeavored to search for similarities in diverse patterns of thought and effected a synthesis of these forces without obliterating their separate identities. The process required elimination or dilution of worthless traits and reinterpretation of valuable ones from both Eastern and Western cultures. As a result, in this age, the apparent dichotomy between national and regional loyalties, Eastern and Western education, past and present values, ancient and modern traditions seemed resolved in the psyche of the Indian intellectuals.

To this age of regeneration Munshi supplied his vigor, imagination, and artistic talent. Having been exposed to the Western education, literature, political thought, and religion, Munshi recognized the opportunity the West offered to Indians to discover themselves. But if he was fascinated by the organizational strength of the Western educational and political institutions, he was not deterred from vigorously denouncing Westernism, a slavish imitation of the West. Again, while denouncing self-enervating Indian traditions, the revival of ancient Indian thoughts attracted Munshi. His spirited nationalism, zeal for India's freedom, motivated him to search for an ideal; but his extreme independence of the spirit enabled him to discern drawbacks of blindly adhering to any system, institution or individual. Consequently, contradictory forces manifested in Munshi's life and works.

It is maintained that the examination of the prevalence of paradoxical traits in Munshi's writings has remained an unin-

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

vestigated issue in Munshi criticism.[2] I have tried to explain this in this book by scrutinizing the man's personality in its relationship to his age and analyzing its depiction in his writings. The paradoxical traits inherent in the age influenced him, but his independent self, providing the positive synthesizing force, harmonized them. The process was spontaneous but the artist captured the intermittent divergent traits and projected them in conflicting themes and characters as he recorded the harmonized vision in his writings.

According to the theory of literature, sociological considerations of the writer and his work may not strictly be included in literary criticism. But Munshi's motivational force being closely associated with social regeneration, the sociology of the writer, his profession, and institution of literature in his time need to be examined. "...The social provenance and status of the writer, his social ideology, which may find expression in extraliterary pronouncements and activities," are considered relevant material by Wellek and Warren.[3] To recognize Munshi the man in his social, political and personal context is essential to fully evaluate the artist.

Munshi was primarily known as a novelist and a dramatist, though he wrote in all genres of literature except poetry. An examination of his craft reveals that both in his novels and plays, the nucleus of his artistic technique is dramatic. Since the spirit of nationalism motivated him to generate cultural revitalization of contemporary society, Munshi's ideology is best represented in his historical and mythological works that recast India's past traditions in their modern relevance. But the historian and the romanticist were under total control of Munshi's self. Consequently, all of Munshi's works reflect his personal paradoxical traits projected into different characters, enhancing the element of conflict in his works. But this conflict is often resolved by the imposition of Munshi's self or personal ideology, not by the law of aesthetic inevitability, leaving the work sometimes artistically deficient if the two do not blend. Munshi's irrepressible urge at self-expression in all activities makes it imperative to recognize the man to eva-

[2] Yashvant Doshi, *Kanaiyalal Munshi : Adhyayan na Ketlak Prashno* (Kanaiyalal Munshi : Some Issues for Study) in *Granth*, special edition on Munshi, Vol. 8, No. 10-11, Oct.-Nov. 1971, pp. 12-16.

[3] Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1942), p. 90.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

luate the artist. Such an approach becomes mandatory.

This study is an attempt to establish the relationship between Munshi's life, personality, ideology, and art.

Munshi harmonized polarities of thought through his homogeneous indwelling spirit, his *svadharma*. It comprised two aspects: his personal nature, and his *dharma*—duty—towards his fellowmen. In its turn, his personal nature was governed by another set of twin forces of *love* and *power*. Imbedded in it was his strong awareness of the continuation of cultural traits in his individuality that enabled him to ascertain his *dharma*. From the recognition of his indwelling spirit emanated his ideas that were disseminated in his literary and thoughtful writings, and concretized in his constructive activities.

Munshi's *love* had another dimension, a search for the other half of his 'undivided soul.' This faith in ideal conjugal love materialized in his relationship with his second wife Lilavati. The realization of unity of souls along with the sublimation of sex was also fundamental to his program of cultural regeneration which is well expounded in his *Bhagavad Gita and Modern Life*. The conviction had paradoxical sources once again. It was *born* out of his belief in the Aryan tradition (*Guhyasutra*), and was *realized* in his untraditional second marriage with a widow. Such iconoclast-preserver synthesis was apparent in still another context.

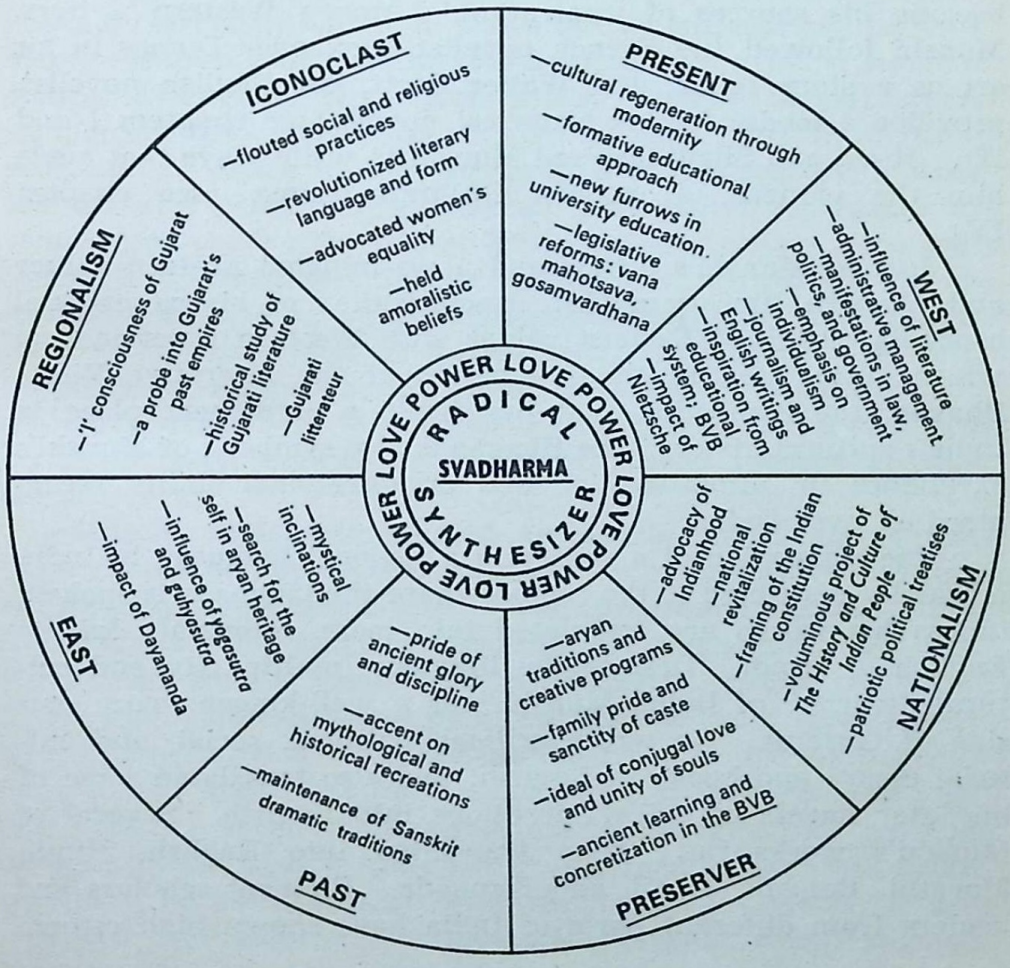
Munshi recognized the *power* of money and prestige. Although an admirer and follower of Gandhi for some time, Munshi adhered to affluence resulting from his successful legal profession, suggesting a deviation from Gandhi's concept of simplicity and of immorality of legal profession to earn a living. Being an extreme individualist, subscribing to no school but drawing inspiration from many, Munshi defined his own national program that was not devoid of the *power* of money, position, and office.

With *love-power* complex as the catalyst, Munshi hardly ever indulged in sentimentalism of self-sacrifice, nor did he brood over failures. He was aggressive, optimistic, and acquired a position of *power* incited by *love*, often self-love. He symbolized constant action disseminating his energies into numerous areas of human interest with equal zeal. His activities were symbolic of the nineteenth century awakening in India, often termed as the Indian Renaissance. Like other Re-

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

naissance figures including Tagore, Munshi made significant contributions to literature, art, philosophy, journalism, education, research, law, politics, administration, and social reform. All his activities had social and/or personal dimensions. They were either geared toward national and cultural revitalization, self-elevation, or expression of personal emotions and beliefs. His literary writings reflect all three forces working simultaneously and, therefore, represent essential Munshi.

The following chart depicts my interpretation of Munshi's personality in relation to his work and activities:



In this classification various phases are not mutually exclusive, they overlap and suggest the fusion of these elements in Munshi, who is governed by his *svadharma*. The epitome of Munshi's activities concretizing his ideology, the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, may be found latent in almost every aspect.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Munshi's activities in diverse fields had a common objective: expanding the class of the educated and intellectuals all over India who would infuse new ideas for cultural revitalization in society. Along with literature, journalism and education remained his principal vehicles for the purpose. He emphasized, in his reflective writings and letters, the need to recognize cultural continuity of India and the synthesis of Aryan values with modern needs.

Munshi was influenced by Indian and Western writers and ideologies. Among Indians, Dayanand Sarasvati, Shri Aurobindo, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya, and Mahatma Gandhi became his sources of inspiration.[4] Among Western writers, Munshi followed the French novelist Alexander Dumas in his art as a story teller; and Walter Scott, the English novelist, provided a model for his historical novels (see chapters I and II). Ibsen and Shaw inspired Munshi to write plays that made him the pioneer of modern Gujarati drama (see chapter IV).

Just as Munshi's novels and plays mingled Eastern values and Western literary modes, concretization of his educational concepts combined Eastern values with Western functionalism which culminated in the foundation of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, the institution that has found a permanent place in India's cultural history. The Bhavan is also symbolic of Munshi's excellence in administrative and organizational ability recognized all over India.

The reputation of a writer in a regional language in India is usually restricted to the region where the language is spoken, unless his works are translated into more commonly known English or Hindi. Despite the linguistic multiplicity and cultural diversity of India, Munshi was a well-known figure outside of Gujarat. He wrote critical, political, social, and cultural essays and books in English; and also translated some of his later novels of epical intentions into English. Several of Munshi's works have been translated into English, Hindi, Marathi, Bengali, Tamil, and Kannada. Eminent scholars and leaders from different parts of India have shown high esteem

[4] Munshi mentions his sources of inspiration in "Dr. Munshi's reply to felicitations" included in *Munshi at Seventy-Five* (Bombay: Dr. K. M. Munshi's 76th Birthday Celebrations Committee, 1962), p. 174. No editor is mentioned in the source.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

for Munshi's contribution to India's culture.[5]

Munshi's original English works are utilitarian and functional, not literary creations. Most bilingual writers in India, including Tagore, use their first language for imaginative literary works, since their primary objective is to express themselves and not to address the English speaking audience or people outside their regions. They use English for discursive and reflective works to communicate with a larger audience.

Although Munshi attained a high mark of literary achievement, the essential force of his works is his self—not his art; he used art to project his self. When Munshi's artistic imagination produced excellent work, it was often an unconscious achievement. Munshi's art may be called spontaneous, not a result of critical awareness. His objective was unrestricted self-expression, not artistic perfection, though he may have incidentally achieved it. Since he was primarily a writer and not a critic, his literary criticism often lacked profundity, sometimes becoming provocative by its imbalance and subjectivity. Munshi's inability to remain detached in scholarly or critical evaluations made him a partisan to himself, be it political, historical, or literary work. Once this is understood, much of Munshi critique may be geared in the right direction. Critics trying to discern artistic flaws in his works could comprehend the basis of, rather than wonder at, Munshi's uneven literary achievements.

Munshi intuitively reacted to stifling trends in contemporary literary genres and infused new spirit into literature. He did not give himself a *deliberate* program to create a new literary form or a language, but they were spontaneously created by his innate talent and passion for unconventionality. When the modern scholars point out that Munshi never *searched* for new forms or language for the novel or the drama, they are partially right; but their critical note is unwarranted. The new criticism seems more a reaction to the laudatory critiques of the previous age on Munshi's works, than an accurate appreciation of his contribution. The later critics do not arrive at a balanced evaluation of Munshi's achievements, since they perhaps do not recognize what Munshi achieved while criticizing

[5] *Munshi at Seventy-Five* carries articles on various facets of Munshi by his contemporaries.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

what he never set out to accomplish.[6]

Munshi's characters are essentially projections of himself; and in his own words he was a 'conglomeration of idealism and realism.' The dreamer, governed by strong feelings of *love* and *power*, was an activist and a practical man. His spiritual search was antithetized by his love for materialistic life. The lawyer in him could perceive inherent opportunities in varied situations and seize them to his advantage. Munshi's characters reflect his aspirations, strength and weaknesses. His ideology of Aryan culture, frequently narrowed down, indicates his pride of the personal Brahminical cult. Although Munshi declared that art was for art's sake, for him it was for his own sake. Such preoccupation made him repeat the same themes, ideology, and characters in new situations and under different names. His lawyer-like ability to defend either side lent dramatic force to his characters. They often emerge as vivid personalities, but ultimately surrender to their author's will.

Munshi's radical spirit strengthened his natural talent at creative art. His facility as a story teller, dramatic insight for characterization and conflicting situations, and his ability to create realistic and effective dialogues, helped him produce inimitable works of art.

Although with growing age and missionary zeal Munshi the dramatist was overpowered by the visionary man, the novelist continued to produce ambitious works of epic dimensions. Driven by the creative urge, his iconoclastic itch never fully dominated his instinct that needed to preserve the fundamentals of tradition as amply illustrated in *Tapasvini* and *Krishnavatara*. Munshi's psyche displayed an ideal balance of pragmatic and philosophic precepts as evidenced by a synthesized human-god who epitomizes Munshi's concept of perfection in *Krishnavatara*. In its introduction, Munshi describes Krishna as "Wise and valorous... loving and loved, far-seeing and yet acting in the living present, gifted with sage-like detachment and yet intensely human; the diplomat, the sage and the man of action with a personality as luminous as that of a divinity."[7] Munshi's paradoxical traits seem to respond naturally to the complex of antitheses in Krishna as Munshi saw him. Krishna's

[6] The changing critical standards vis-a-vis Munshi criticism are fully assessed in chapter III.

[7] Introduction to *Krishnavatara*, p. 1.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

character is Munshi's climactic conceptualization of a national hero, a homage to his favorite deity, and a self-projection. The last part of this incomplete novel in eight volumes coincided with the last phase of Munshi's life, his death in 1971, and became a symbolic work of *art* that punctuated the life of the *man*.

* * *

A question may be raised, "What is Munshi's place in world literature?" Munshi represents the collective consciousness inherent in the modernization of India — the consciousness that recognizes the past and blends with the present as it conceptualizes the future. As stated above, it is at once individual and social. In Munshi's writings the zeal to retain the spirit and antiquity of the Indian heritage, blending it with the Westernized modernization, becomes the central force. In his *Tapasvini* and *Krishnavatara* he attempts to achieve epic dimensions much as Tolstoy attained in *War and Peace*. In the art of story telling Munshi came so close to Alexander Dumas, his recognized mentor, that he was even accused of plagiarizing from Dumas' novels. Munshi's treatment of the historical material in his novels, places him close to Walter Scott.[8] The discussion of social issues in Munshi's serious plays, witty comedies, farces or satires evokes memories of Shavian treatment of social problems in his plays. In the recreation of realism and enunciation or resolution of contemporary social and political problems, Munshi's mentor was Ibsen. In his historical writings, novels, and plays, Munshi may seem narrow and dated for their patriotic note and ideology. But in the portrayal of fundamental human passions, and for the sheer strength of story and its powerful flow, Munshi may rank with the best of story tellers and writers of stageable plays.

Munshi's dissemination of energies in various literary genres, a spontaneous and careless proliferation, often prevented him from achieving the highest as an artist. As happened in Munshi's comparison with other Indian litterateurs or nationalists, like Bankim, Tagore or Gandhi,[9] in world literature too Munshi falls short of achieving the grandeur attained by the stalwarts. He accomplished enough to command comparison

[8] See chapter III
[9] See chapter I

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

with Tolstoy, Dumas, Scott, Shaw, and Ibsen, and did even more in other areas of constructive activity that none of these writers ever attempted, but did not achieve the height of any one in a single genre. Ironically, the energizing force of the *self* in Munshi, the center of the harmonization process of paradoxical traits, delimited his vision and prevented him from being a Tolstoy, or Ibsen, or Shaw. The inherent grandeur of the tragic vision, the characteristic of these writers, emanating from their perception of conflicting elements of life, is absent from Munshi's works, since his *self* harmonized the conflict.

His overpowering self-love prevented him from projecting those aspects of his characters' inner selves that had no parallel or relevance to his own psyche. Negating his self to penetrate into the inner workings of his characters' minds, a quality of a great dramatist — Coleridge called it 'negative capability' and admired it in Shakespeare —, was not Munshi's forte. His self ruled supreme; fortunately its inherent paradoxes provided ample scope to Munshi's dramatic genius.

The *Dictionary of Oriental Literatures* describes Munshi as the person who 'transformed the facts of India's past.... history,' in his historical novels.[10] If Munshi were only a writer, and not a nationalist reformer, statesman, or educator, he would have projected himself as a romantic story teller and historical novelist enabling us to focus on a single perspective. But Munshi emerged as a major figure in the world of thought, action, literature, politics, education, and social reform. As an artist and a man he felt and lived the frenzied life of a typical renaissance figure; but more than anything else, he translated his vision into action, and his ideas and feelings into literature —and achieved that which none of the figures he is compared with, simultaneously attained.

Munshi wrote thirteen out of sixteen novels, and fourteen out of fifteen plays before India's independence in 1947. Novels written after independence capsulize themes of cultural unification revealing more of the man than the artist. Evidences, including the fact that he wrote only one play after 1947, indicate a decline of the dramatist. Munshi's post-independence

[10] "The second structure was developed by K.M. Munshi, who transformed the facts of India's past into a movement of its basic history, Thus, his *Patan ni Prabhuta* (The Supremacy of Patan, 1918) truly begins the Gujarati historical novel." *Dictionary of Oriental Literatures*, Vol. II (New York : Basic Books, Inc., 1974), p. 105.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

works increasingly dealt with perpetuation of his ideology of cultural revitalization of Indian society. His English works during this period consisted more of reflective and critical essays on political, cultural, and educational discourses.

This book is extensive as far as it links different phases of Munshi's life and activity, and intensive in so far as it concentrates on the central force of his art. My study also establishes that the world of the artist was restricted by the man's perception, and remained within the periphery of Munshi's personality. His art was inspirational and not a result of cultivated critical awareness; and gradually the man superseded the artist.

Munshi, the man, like Tennyson's Ulysses, was possessed by perpetual activity. At the age of eighty-four he was still young, as young as he was when he was trying to envision his 'pillar of fire,' and still hungry for more to create—divinely discontent.[11]

[11] What Munshi the man expressed at sixty was still true of him at eighty-four : "I know ..... I am of earth, earthy. .. I know I have achieved nothing. I have tried to keep my gaze fixed on the pillar of fire, now distinct, now enveloped in a phosphorescent haze, and now again lost in a cloud. I have done nothing; my endeavours are but crude passing expression of the radiance through the vehicle, which I know, I am." K. M. Munshi, "I Look Back" in *Munshi : His Art and Work*, eds., N. C. Mehta et al, (Bombay : Shri K. M. Munshi Diamond Jubilee Committee, 1947), p. 535.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

CHAPTER 1

An Overview of the Man and His Time

K. M. MUNSHI'S life span of eighty-four years, 1887-1971, extended over a crucial period of modern Indian history as India searched for an identity, fought for freedom, and felt the pains of a growing, independent nation. During this time Munshi made significant contributions in varied fields of literature, art, religion, philosophy, education, journalism, politics, law, administration, social reform and other constructive programs. Such multifarious involvement often exhibited an intriguing combination of paradoxical traits in Munshi. The creative artist was also an able administrator; the militant reformer estalished himself as a practical compromiser. The ruthless boss was a fervent lover; the dreamer was antithesized by a confirmed constructive worker. While the lawyer in him did not exclude a mystic, the State Governor and shrewd statesman was discovered to be a radical liberal. The iconoclast was also a preserver of traditions.

In displaying contradictions, Munshi reflected the characteristic spirit of the Indian Renaissance, the age that by its very nature produced ambivalences. Ainslie T. Embree explains such incongruity thus, "Because of the mingling of modern and

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

traditional elements, the search for national identity in India is marked by paradoxes and ambiguities."[1] Antitheses between the past and the present, antiquity and modernity, the East and the West seem to be inherent in this age of renaissance in India. Individuals also manifested their diverse affinities in search of the spirit of freedom. Munshi's elusive personality is reflected in most of the major fields of activity of his age, making him a representative figure of the Indian Renaissance.

The impact of the western rule, approach and learning on India manifested differently with each generation. In the early part of the nineteenth century, India had looked to the West for inspiration and progress ignoring much of its own heritage; the later part had produced in its reformist zeal a synthesis of the East and the West; the last part of the century, since 1857, however, witnessed the emergence of the new spirit of nationalism that withdrew from the dependence on the western inspirational source, and sought answers in India's own cultural heritage. De Bary maintains, "In this age, several idealistic individuals emerged from the educated class of Indian society to respond to the combined challenge of Christian religious ideas and of Western rationalist and utilitarian thought."[2]

Munshi was born in this age when India had set out on the search for its national identity. Embree's analysis establishes, "The fundamental aspect of nationality was the sense that individual identity hinges on the existence of national identity with all the attendant psychological involvement that such identification entails."[3] Paradoxes of the age were correlated with personalities of nationalist leaders. Munshi's ambivalence may become explicable in the light of the identification of the personal and the national search. Munshi grew up under the complex influence of the West, the Indian Renaissance, and nationalism. Some of the nationalist and religious reformists made a great impact on Munshi. He said:

> Those who gave me direction were some of its (Indian Renaissance) great architects: Dayanand Sarasvati, who restored in me the pride of ancient race and undying culture; Bankimchandra, who fired my romantic imagination

[1] Ainslie T. Embree, *India's Search for National Identity* (New York : Alfred Knopf, 1972), p. 7.

[2] De Bary, p. 551.

[3] Embree, p. 115.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

> to go in search of new worlds; Shri Aurobindo, who taught me the love of Bharat Mata, the Eternal Mother, and aroused aspirations for spiritual fulfilment. Then came Gandhi. He opened for me the vistas of national greatness, which can be acquired only through a dedicated life.[4]

This awakening and the search for freedom were inaugurated in Bengali literature by Bankim. In Munshi's words he was, "The founder of modern novel, humor, and in a sense the Seer who saw modern nationalism in India in its true shape and color."[5] Munshi 'humbly carries forward the heritage' which Bankim left by capturing the spirit in the portrayal of men and women, and the vision of the motherland.

> I created the modern woman with the right to love as she wills and live her own life; the man who is prepared to live the life that he is born to, unabashed and triumphant; the joys of man and woman, the joys of the flesh of the united minds and the linked wills; the *joy of life* as it is lived—richly, spontaneously and sinlessly; the vivid worship of the Mother in which our old time love of *Bharat*, our collective urge for social synthesis and our dominant political consciousness were fused and transformed into the triumphant Nationalism of the day; and above all the search and portrayal of Beauty, rising above and beyond prudery, convention, tradition and the transient fashions of generations.[6]

Munshi, almost simultaneously with Gandhi,[7] appears on the Gujarati literary scene with his radical ideas to celebrate, not abandon, the joys of life.

An heir to the Indian Renaissance, Munshi was fully drawn into the fight for freedom, a release from all bondages: traditional, social, and political, from his early age. He went to college when the political atmosphere was surging with revo-

[4] *Munshi at Seventy-Five*, p. 174.

[5] Bankim's creative art and vision gave "us a new medium of expression, a new woman and a new man and above all the vision of the motherland, revealed to us as the Maternal power in a form of Beauty.." Munshi, "The Heritage of Renaissance." in *Munshi* (1947), p. 540.

[6] Ibid, p. 539. Emphasis mine. In his early novel, *Svapnadrishta* (*SV*), Munshi identifies the Mother Goddess with his country. He mentions in his autobiography, *Adadhe Raste* (*AR*), that the novel was based on his personal experiences. *AR*, pp. 209-211.

[7] Munshi published his first novel in 1913, Gandhi made his first impact on the Gujarati literary scene in 1914. Mansukhlal Jhaveri, "Gujarati Literature", in *Contemporary Indian Literature* (Delhi : Sahitya Academy, 1957), p. 53.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

lutionary ideas of patriotism. Among his teachers at Baroda College was Shri Aurobindo (then Professor Arvind Ghosh), who taught French and English. His radical and revolutionary ideas attracted Munshi temporarily, as he found Aurobindo's terrorist views unacceptable. He responded to Aurobindo's semi-mystical message of being true to oneself: "Believe in yourself. Work for yourself. Live for yourself. The moment we decide to rule ourselves, our object will be accomplished."[8] The new spirit of nationalism defined by Aurobindo[9] and Dayanand made a deep mark on Munshi's mind. This idealistic vision could be made a reality by programs based on Dayanand's concept of Arya Samaj for cultural regeneration. It depended on:

> Removal of caste distinctions and untouchability, and inequality of women. Highest scientific education should be grafted on an education essentially Indian; the use of national language and the pursuit of Sanskrit as a predominant national influence; repudiation of Westernism; reorganization of life on a basis of freedom as in Vedic times and the sturdy resistance against foreign rule and alien culture.[10]

The spirit of freedom in Munshi attempted to eliminate many social and cultural taboos, but did not discard all it encountered; he reinvigorated the roots by synthesis of the East and the West. It is significant that the spirit of nationalism had taken a clear shape in Munshi's mind at the early age of seventeen which he retained till the end of his life, utilizing it to translate his ideals into reality. He recorded in his diary on March 27, 1905, "Thoughts on the river side 'the sum total of the duties of an Indian patriot.' " He lists:

1. The fusion of sub-castes
2. Women—equality of education; evolution of infant marriage: minimum age for girls 14, for boys 18; the introduction of widow remarriage (at least for infant widows)
3. Abolition of joint family system
4. Religious liberty

[8] *Munshi* (1947), p. 288.

[9] In reply to Munshi's question, "How can nationalism be developed?" Aurobindo suggested a reading of Vivekananda. Munshi also read Patanjali's *Yogasutra* which left a lasting impact on his mind. He mentions that this reading shattered his fascination for Western culture. *AR*, pp. 208-211.

[10] *Munshi* (1947), p. 290.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

5. Some minor defects such as the *purdah* system and caste evils

Political program:

1. The formation of the Indian nation
   (a) The brotherhood of Indians
   (b) A common language; English for the elite; Hindustani for the masses
2. Freedom of speech and writing
3. No taxation without representation
4. Universal free education
5. All services, political, civil and military open to merit without distinction of race or religion
6. At last independence[11]

Details of the program reflect a profound influence of the contemporary spirit of nationalism on Munshi's impressionable mind. But even at this early age, Munshi displayed extreme independence. His radical reformist zeal was never disentangled from the value he set on traditions, for example, his belief in castes. He advocated fusion of sub-castes, not the abolition of castes, as was common with many reformists. Elsewhere he said, "Caste is a wonderful object. Its ties can be broken, but its consciousness cannot be relinquished."[12] Despite his renunciation of the formal membership of his caste, probably following the lead of many a nationalist, Munshi never could be divorced from his intuitive oneness with it. He always believed, "But still the caste is mine, and I belong to it."[13] An antithesis was evident in Munshi's dislike for 'reformism' founded on false idealism or fascination for Western life. He said, "A sudden change to what we call 'reformed' notions of life destroys stamina, stuns national dignity and self-confidence, and introduces puerile mimicry of the West which poisons our existence."[14]

A second point in his diary very significantly refers to women's equality, education and liberation from social

[11] Pages of Munshi's diaries reproduced in *Munshi : His Art and Work* Vol. I, eds. J. H. Dave et al (Bombay : Shri Munshi Seventieth Birthday Celebrations Committee, 1957), pp. 36-37.

[12] Munshi, *Sidhan Chadhan* (SC), Vol I, p. 111.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Munshi in a letter to his college friend P. K. Desai in 1917. "Landmark Letters", in *Munshi* (1947), p. 5.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

bondage reflecting major aspects of nationalism in India.[15] Later, in 1912-13 he championed the cause of widow remarriage, and married a widow himself in 1926. Under 'Political Program' he speaks of "finally 'independence'."[16] At a very early date Munshi had visualized the need for linguistic commonness and common literature which anticipated some future national problems.[17] The inherent ambivalence in linguistic differences was, for Munshi, an instrument to consolidate different groups under a common culture.

Munshi syncretized ambivalent traits from Indian and Western ideologies, ancient and modern values, liberation from and preservation of traditions. Just as he differentiated between reverence for Aryan convention and its blind perpetuation, his love for Western ideas of freedom and organizational strength did not obviate his dislike for blind imitation of the West. He felt that the Indian culture was a challenge to 'Westernism' —a slavish following of the West. The fundamentals of culture should become a part of an individual and the integrated self should be reflected in literature, art and politics.[18]

Munshi was overwhelmed by ideas at home and abroad. Simultaneously with Indian, the Western religious and political theories had made an impact on Munshi's personality. Between 1903 and 1907, when Munshi was getting involved in the activities of the Indian National Congress,[19] he read Dean Ferar's *Jesus Christ,* Renan's *Life of Christ,* Tom Paine's *The Rights of Man,* John Mill's *Liberty,* Michalet's *French Revolution,* as well as Carboneri, Garibaldi and Mazzini.[20] To inculcate the message of freedom and democracy and to prepare the country, Munshi emulated great orators of his time. One of his ideals was Surendranath Banerjee. To conquer his shyness and develop the art of elocution, Munshi memorized

[15] The second half of the nineteenth and the early part of the twentieth century in India witnessed an all pervasive involvement with women's rights and liberation unparalleled in the world. (A. T. Embree—in his seminar on History of South Asia, Fall 1957.) In his college days Munshi had also read C. Y. Chintamani's *Indian Social Reform* and John Mill's *Subjection of Women. AR,* p. 161.

[16] Most national programs were claiming only autonomy and representation in 1905, not independence.

[17] Munshi's subsequent contribution to Gujarati language and literature provides a significant link between his early vision and its consequent execution. At a later date Munshi established a Sanskrit *Pathashala* and contributed to the propagation of Hindi literature. See below.

[18] Munshi, *Creative Art of Life,* pp. 18-20.

[19] Munshi, *I Follow the Mahatma,* p. 12.

[20] *AR,* p. 166.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

passages from European masters: Demosthenes, Cicero, Chatham, Burke, and Patrick Henry.[21] In 1906, Munshi was considered a good orator. His tenacity to persevere to pursue a goal and attain it became the secret of his success. Much later as a lawyer in the Bombay High Court, he practised English conversation with the same tenacity.[22]

Munshi's independent genius extracted the best from both philosophies. Just as he differentiated between the reverence for Aryan convention and its blind perpetuation, his love for the Western masters did not obviate his dislike for the blind imitation of the West. He synthesized the past, the present, the East, and the West in the belief that in the framework of the present, the fundamentals of the culture should indwell an individual and the integrated self should inform literature, art, and politics.[23]

Munshi's concept of cultural reintegration hinged on his recognition of two dimensions of his personality: his individual nature and his cultural traits. In 1917 he said:

> When an Aryan becomes the embodiment of power of his temperament, he becomes an elemental force...He realizes self-fulfilment on the lines of his own temperament, he works to express his own soul. He is his own law giver, the lord of his destiny expressing himself on the lines of his *svadharma*[24]

Munshi saw his own knowledge of *svadharma* as the basis of all his activities, including writing. Since he considered his life and works as a process of self-sculpture, some of his characters became his self-portrayals, others attained his unfulfilled dreams. Visualization of a goal was a challenge to Munshi, who was urged to perpetual action by it. It made him ruthless even with himself in his passion to pursue his goal.[25]

[21] *AR*, p. 171. [22] *SC* I, pp. 115-116.

[23] In "The Man and His Message" B. P. Bhatt says, "Without cultural reintegration merely social, economic, and political programs are doomed to failure." *Munshi* (1947), p. 521.

[24] Quoted by Joseph John in "Constructive Work" in *Munshi* (1947), p. 480.

[25] Munshi records his efforts to regain strength in his moments of frustration and dejection. He used to write "Letters to Myself" in one of which he says, "Be bold, try harder; otherwise you will be a slave. Show to the world that you are capable of subjugating your inner strifes. Do not waste your time and energy. Why do you weep like a woman? Strive, labor, Action alone is the strength of the present." *AR*, pp. 217-218. So were his characters. Munshi had made action a part of his indwelling spirit.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Aiming at an absolute integration of theory and practice of word, thought and deed, Munshi was not content with mere philosophical exposition of his ideology. He searched for the impelling force that would transform his ideal into reality. His ideals were: "Napoleon's deeds,[26] Dayanand's fiery gospels, (and) Aurobindo's prophetic vision threw light on this something"[27] that he endeavored to attain. At a later stage Patanjali's *Yogasutra* and Krishna's *Gita* became his inspirants. Still later, the examples of Gandhi and Aurobindo shaped his vision, his "Pillar of Fire."

This visualization of the goal was a challenge to Munshi's action-thirsty self. For this he derived his ideal from Nietzche's idea of superman, to live dangerously. It also made him ruthless in his passion to pursue his goal. He believed, as do his characters, in ends justifying the means, despite all his moral and philosophical declamation. The embodiment of his hero is the Machiavellian Kautilya, or the ruthless Parashurama. Ancient Indian culture and the western mode of execution became the generating forces of power for the Self Munshi was seeking to express in his literary, political and social activities.[28] His ideology had progressed from the love of western values to anti-westernism, from atheistic and materialistic ideology[29] to that of faith in yoga and cultural heritage to transcend human weaknesses.[30]

Munshi's Ideology in his Literary Writings:

Munshi molded thought by life and life by thought. He believed "that realization of one's true self, one's personality, is salvation and the path to it...is self-expression."[31] There runs a common thread of self-expression linking Munshi's personality, writings and his creative programs.

In his literary writings, Munshi sought inspiration from Western writers. The styles of Carlyle, De Quincey and Macaulay influenced him in his early writings, which he soon abandoned, as he realized he had fallen prey to a fascination for

[26] When Munshi was in high school, he had read Abbot's *Napoleon*. In his novel *SV* he records his fascination for Napoleon, and mentions in his autobiography that he had started writing an epic on the French hero's life. In 1943 he said, "Napoleon's valor still inspires me in my weaker moments." *AR*, pp. 160-161.

[27] Munshi, "I Look Back," in *Munshi* (1947), p. 533.

[28] See my chart in the "Introduction." [29] *AR*, p. 206. [30] *AR*, p. 211.

[31] V. R. Trivedi, "Foreword" to *The Novels of Munshi* by R. I. Patel, p. iv.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

big words.[32] Scott's historical novels and Dumas' art as a story-teller became Munshi's models. "Dumas is the formulating force of my creative art," said Munshi and prided himself on mastering the art of a story-teller.[33] Of his art Munshi said:

> The principal features which I brought to Gujarati fiction were an interesting story, dramatic situation and dialogue, and living characters. I have remained first and foremost a story-teller, not a moralist. ...My principal concern was the real drama of life, neither theories of life nor morals.[34]

Munshi's rebellious genius challenged the conventions of Gujarati literature before his time. Lofty, imaginative flights, platonic love, spiritual search and other-worldliness had become the chief characteristics of literature preceding him (see Ch. III). Intellectualization, and not actualization of experience had become the writers' goal. Munshi brought the literary muse down to earth. He conceptualized the sublimation of love through the realization of its physical aspects.

Munshi gave new shape and vigor to the Gujarati novel and drama, and developed a new linguistic style for them (see Ch. III, IV). He created his vision of heroism from the myths of ancient Aryan culture. Munshi's concept of a hero, both in life and literature, emerged from his understanding of Aryan culture. Of his works Munshi said:

> I have tried to understand the phenomenon of Aryan culture, its spread, its trials, its triumphs, its external power. My English works ... are but feeble attempts at studying the phenomenon. My imagination threw up Vasishtha, Vishvamitra and Parashurama, the embodiments of dynamic unity; Lopamudra and Lomaharshini, free and triumphant women, man's equal and inseparable; and their gigantic struggles to translate their personality into a world of culture which is destined to survive till the end of life.[35]

Munshi's nationalistic heroic ideals emanated from the fusion of love for self and country. These ideals found an expression

[32] *AR*, p. 184.

[33] Ibid., p. 133.

[34] Munshi in his letter to Dr. Taraporewala, written from the Bijapur jail in 1933. Included in *Munshi* (1947) in "Landmark Letters", p. 20.

[35] Munshi, "I Look Back" in *Munshi* (1947), p. 535.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

in his plays. Dramatization of an imaginative experience and its delineation into an engrossing story became the central force of Munshi's art. Munshi's personality pivoted around strong feelings of *love* and *power*. This is evident in his personal life and also his characters, who were his spiritual off-springs. Of his characters and their preoccupation with love and power, Munshi says:

> There is perhaps an inordinate tendency to depict a clash between men and women of power and ambition with dramatic intensity. . . .The dominant note of my works is love, not a thing to be talked of with a hushed voice or stifled by conventional situations or poetic phrases; but love, as in actual life, bestriding the world, leaving foot-prints in tears, in blood, in defiance of moral precepts, sanctimonious humbugs and cold-blooded prudes.[36]

Such vision of power reconciled with the choice of Munshi's mentors — Napoleon, Dayananda, Aurobindo and Gandhi — who exhibited immense power: physical, spiritual, and moral. Shridharani suggests that Munshi's characters "displayed a marked proclivity toward love and power. . . .The love complex and the power complex constitute the major overtones of Munshi's personality too.[37] Munshi's love complex had several levels; it included love for God, for humanity, for his nation, for Gujarat, even for himself, and equally strong for all of them. He harmonized inherent polarities of such complex love through the recognition of his indwelling spirit, his *svadharma*. The emergent figure of Munshi naturally posed a complex of paradoxes. As fully explained and illustrated in the Introduction, Munshi dissipated his energies — sometimes driven by an inner force, at others by a deliberate plan to gain position of power — in multifarious activities.

His versatility became his outstanding trait. Like Tagore, he was associated with more varied movements than many other reformists, educators and nationalists of the century. In this regard Joseph John said of Munshi, "His idealism and energy can attract Gandhi, his yogic urge can evoke a paternal response from Aurobindo, his practical sense and capacity can draw to him such men as Pandit Nehru, Rajaji and Sardar

[36] Munshi, "Landmark Letters" in *Munshi* (1947), p. 20.
[37] Krishnalal Shridharani, "The Man and His Message" in *Munshi* (1947), p. 515.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Patel."[38] Although Munshi reflected and admired these personalities, often emulating them in certain aspects of their ideologies, he could not be a staunch follower of any one of them. He remained a non-conformist, accepting and rejecting ideas guided by his independent spirit.

Such independence, vigor, and versatility, aided by Munshi's love-power syndrome, were manifested in several modes achieving remarkable success in varied areas. Although Munshi conquered smaller peaks of achievement, lower than the highest — the Everest, the sum-total of his Kanchanjunghas and Kailases wins for him a unique place that must be fully recognized by posterity. Failing to reach the Everest of any activity, Munshi has often been considered a middling genius in each. But such independent evaluations in each area seem to ignore the totality of his achievement. In spite of the fact that Munshi never reached the height of a Gandhi, a Tagore, or an Aurobindo; a Dumas, a Scott, or a Tolstoy; an Ibsen or a Shaw — and the list could be multiplied — he constituted a confluence of traits that touched them all.

Politics and Nationalism:

Munshi's political involvement indicated his extreme independence and a constant quest in the light of his indwelling spirit. Munshi's anti-British sentiment had its origin in his childhood experience when his self-respect was deeply wounded.[39] Enchanted by the magic slogan "my country," Munshi offered to be a volunteer in the camp of Tilak in 1907 at the eighteenth session of the Congress in Surat. Later he worked as a young politician in the Home-Rule movement of Dr. Annie Besant. His association with the nationalist movement of the Congress was first severed in 1920. Munshi underwent imprisonment as a result of his participation in Gandhi's Civil Disobedience movement of 1930-32. A full time *Satyagraha*, however, was not acceptable to Munshi. He declined Gandhi's suggestion to leave his legal profession. But his patriotism never declined; it manifested itself in more individualistic modes to advocate a united India.

[38] J. John, "Constructive Work," in *Munshi* (1947), p. 511.

[39] Munshi's father was insulted by a British Deputy Collector of Surat. Since then Munshi had nicknamed all British officers "Brian De Bois Gilbert," the wicked knight from Scott's *Ivanhoe*. *AR*, pp. 166-167.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Munshi's political writings reveal his independent spirit. In *I Follow the Mahatma* (English), he records his personal convictions and experiences. It is an artistic exposition of Gandhi's philosophy. Gandhi had already constituted a part of Munshi's 'pillar of fire' and Munshi never ceased to admire him. But Munshi fearlessly expressed his dissenting views on the practicality of Gandhi's *ahimsa* (non-violence) in view of the internal and external disorder in India. As a disciple of Gandhi and the *Gita,* Munshi had to follow his own truth and his own *dharma.* The disagreement resulted in dissociation. Munshi's candid letter of May 26, 1941 to Gandhi was described as a "transparent letter" in Gandhi's reply.

Munshi's letter:

Forgive me if I cannot reconcile myself to these injunctions. ...If war comes to India's frontiers or the British machinery of maintaining order weakens, they will perhaps grow more frequent and intense, if a division of India is sought to be enforced by internal or external agencies through organized violence. If life, home and shrine and honor of women is threatened by *goondaism,* organized resistance in self-defence appears to me to be a paramount and inalienable duty, whatever forms such resistance may take. ...I deem them (gymnasia) an essential machinery for training our race in the art of self-defence ... giving us some self-confidence to resist ... Since I came to you in 1930, you have been more to me than a political leader. .. You have been a beacon for the last ten years lighting me on the path of the little spirituality that I can lay claim to. Hence the pain I feel in confessing that I have searched in vain for a way out of this conflict. I can, of course, keep quiet or can acquiesce in what you say ... But something in me rebels against such a course. ... I cannot pledge myself not to preach, help, organize, or sympathize with organized resistance to violence in self-defence by all possible means. I do not want to be dishonest to myself. ... Please let me know what I should do. ...

To this Gandhi replied:

I have your transparent letter. ... I would not for a moment tolerate suppressing your thoughts or simply par-

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

> roting my views. It should not become either of us. You have the fullest liberty of thought and expression. . . : But remember that non-violent resistance is far superior to violent resistance. . . . I have already made it absolutely clear that violent resistance becomes the duty of those who have no faith in non-violence. . . .[40]

In *Akhand Hindustan* (English), Munshi emphasizes the fundamental unity of India. With this book he annoyed both Hindus and Muslims. Not being a partisan, like Tagore, Munshi was incomprehensible to both. His belief in the cultural unity of India made him vehemently aggressive in enunciating the gospel of undivided India. He defined a nationalist Muslim and reinterpreted "histories of India."[41] Pakistani nationalists saw in him "a sinister hot-gospeller of Hindu dominion."[42] Indian nationalists alleged that Munshi was "rubbing the communal problem on the wrong side."[43]

In *The Ruin That Britain Wrought* (English), Munshi's ardent patriotism shows in his examination of the statistical data in relation to population, poverty, and the industrial noose that had strangled India. Munshi did not present a new idea; it was a typical example of an Indian Nationalist's theory highlighting the British policy of draining the country, rather than an unbiased analysis. The book is notable for Munshi's capacity as a lawyer to produce an impeccable argument and for the artist's command of his style. Munshi's legal acumen is more obvious in *The Changing Shape of Indian Politics* (English) in which he examines Prof. Coupland's case against Indian nationalism and exposes many fallacies in the writer's thinking. The nationalist, lawyer and the artist, as elsewhere, are fused in most of these dated works.

In *Our Greatest Need* (English) and *Foundations of Indian Culture* (English), Munshi reiterates some of his cultural ideals. Repeatedly, this became the theme of Munshi's works in a later period of his life, especially after 1947. (see Appendix A). He believed that culture can survive if the thinking of the active minority, the intellectual minority which "Toynbee

[40] "Gandhi-Munshi Correspondence" in Munshi, *Akhand Hindustan*, pp. 261-269.

[41] Ibid., pp. 86-91 and 109-115.

[42] V. N. Bhushan, "Man of Letters" in *Munshi* (1947), p. 78.

[43] Ibid., p. 75.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

calls dominant minority,"[44] continues to inspire the masses. Munshi's efforts were focused on the creation of such a class by his literary and public activities, especially the educational that culminated in the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

Munshi's nationalism did not conflict with his love for Gujarat. Such apparent antithesis was characteristic of Indian nationalism of his age. But Munshi gives the source of his love for Gujarat. In 1915 he wrote, "Gujarat is a giant tree. In its roots are secreted the *Karma Yoga* of Krishna and on its branches have sprouted forth Dayananda and Gandhi."[45] Munshi's attachment to Gujarat coincided with his spirit of nationalism. Raising consciousness of Gujarat became a part of Munshi's program to advocate nationalism. He emphasized the essential oneness of all Gujarati speaking people and pioneered the idea of Gujarat as a cultural unit. He named this concept *Asmita* ('I'-consciousness).[46] Consciousness of Gujarat as a living cultural entity (*Vyakti*) became a great force in Munshi's life that sustained him through his varied activities. He rejected foreign standards of separatism in judging regionalism of Indian States as divorced from nationalism. His mission of raising Gujarat consciousness became a catalyst not merely for Munshi's historical novels dealing with the period of consolidation of Gujarat, but also for his other writings.

In *Gujarat and Its Literature* (English), a historical and literary work, Munshi gives the history of Gujarat an organic form. A. B. Keith underlines Munshi's candor despite Munshi's emotional oneness with Gujarat.[47]

In his other historical work, *Glory that was Gurjar Desh* (English), Munshi emphasizes Gujarat's historical continuity through the ages. It displays his acquaintance with the problems of epigraphy, iconography, geology, geography, revealing his scholarly interest. However, Munshi's historical works (see Appendix A) reveal his nationalist bias more than detached scholarship. Due to the overpowering emotional zeal, here displayed in his nationalism, Munshi threw the scholar

[44] Munshi, *Foundations of Indian Culture* (1962), p. 9.

[45] Munshi quoted by Joseph John, "Politics" in *Munshi* (1947), p. 291.

[46] *Asmita* is a term from the *Yogasutra* which means 'I' consciousness. Munshi was the first to use this term in 1913 in *Gujarat ni Asmita*, p. 165.

[47] Keith quoted by Bhushan in *Munshi* (1947), p. 72. Munshi in the preface to *Gujarat and Its Literature* refers to Keith's evaluation, but does not indicate the original source. "Preface," p. xx.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

in the background. The detached objectivity was often sacrificed as the man in him triumphed over the scholar.

Munshi's intuitive attachment with Gujarat was evident from his young age. Inspired by Forbes' *Rasmala* and Briggs' *Cities of Gujarat,* in 1907, Munshi wrote an article *The Grave of Vanished Empires* for the college magazine, in which he shed tears over the vanished glory of Gujarat. In 1909 he wrote a historical account of the destruction of Somnath by Mohmad Gazni. Not only that event became the subject of his novel *Jai Somnath* (1940), but Munshi sponsored the renovation of Somnath temple in Saurashtra in Gujarat and translated his dream of glorious Somnath Mahadeva into reality in 1951.[48] In *Somnath, the Shrine Eternal,* Munshi records his passion for the deity that ties together Munshi's intuitive love for the family heritage, his Brahminhood, literary activity, nationalism and creative program. Incidentally, Munshi's last letter 'Kulapati's Letter' number 486, written fifteen days before his death in 1971, was entitled "Lord Shiva and his Worship."[49]

As President of the Gujarati Literary Conference for several years, Munshi reiterated his revolutionary views on life and literature. Some of his talks were on: "Gujarat, a Cultural Unit," "Defiance of Conventionality," "The Dominant Note of Modern Literature: Joy of Life." Munshi's attacks on otherworldliness and advocacy of the joy of life drew severe criticism from orthodox preservers of morality. Some saw in Munshi an attempt at justification of his own writing and behaviour.

Munshi's intuitive love for Gujarat led him to romanticize the unity and progressiveness of Gujarat in 1925 in his appeal to inaugurate a movement for Gujarat University.[50] Paradoxi-

[48] Details of this in "Somnath Rises Again" in *Munshi*, Vol IV (1957), pp. 89-108.

[49] S. Ramakrishnan, editor of the *Bhavan's Journal*, notes this. Vol XVII No. 15, February 21, 1971, p. 17.

[50] In a speech delivered in 1925, Munshi said, "The rigidity of caste system, which fetters progress in other provinces does not exist here (Gujarat). Its women enjoy freedom and contribute their quota to life far more energetically than in other parts of the country. Religious fanaticism has no hold among the people. Neither communal discord or religious feuds divide the race. ..Its modern literature is certainly one of the best in modern India. Intellectual restlessness, a spirit of organization and self-sacrifice, the gentle grace of cultural existence, and the noble passion of generous manhood—all characterize modern Gujarati culture." Quoted in *Munshi* (1947), p. 488.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

cally, the same Munshi had written social novels and plays deriding the shortcomings of Gujarati society with regard to caste, arranged marriages and women's subjugation, before and after 1925. In neither of these attitudes was Munshi a hypocrite. His rational attitude, that made him intolerent of his people, never was strong enough to uproot his fundamental love for them. According to occasion, the suitable attitude got exaggerated by his passionate spirit.

While Munshi had synthesized the apparent paradox between nationalism and regionalism, he was not unconscious of its inherent antithesis. He denounced 'linguism,' a word, again, coined by Munshi. As early as 1948 he had warned against linguism that would be detrimental to nationalism.

> The elevation of a language as a basis for group sentiment, seeking expression in terms of power-politics, may, for brevity, he termed linguism. It identifies language with culture and equates cultural with political frontiers of a province. This in essence is a form of modern parochial nationalism, for culture never has its boundaries confined to any single language group or areas and has no correlation to political ends.[51]

The separatist tendencies that caused riots on the language issue in the mid-fifties at the time of linguistic reorganization of the States, confirmed Munshi's fear. He was pained by the young author's involvement in encouraging group sentiments in the name of *asmita,* while Munshi's concept of it had implied a local aspect of all-India consciousness.

Munshi's involvement with Gujarat at once reveals his nationalism, program for cultural regeneration, concept of a hero, contribution to Gujarati language and literature,[52] iconoclastic attitude, and preservative instinct. It embodies essential Munshi, and an integration of his vision, art and activity.

Concept of Education:

In *The Creative Art of Life* (English) Munshi defines his concept of education for Indian men and women for cultural regeneration. He says, "Creative education is the art of self-sculpture. Therefore formative education is the only educa-

[51] *Munshi*, Vol IV (1957), p. 38.

[52] See chapters III and IV.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

tion."[53] Merely informative education was ineffective in the regeneration process.

Munshi believed that an absolute integration lay in a man developing a dynamic personality so that all his limitations would disappear from him. This theory was also at the root of the formation of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, besides being the permeating force of all of Munshi's programs. Munshi made his goal explicit:

> The objectives for which the Bhavan stands are the reintegration of the Indian culture in the light of modern knowledge and to suit our present day needs and the resuscitation of its fundamental values in their pristine vigor... We seek the dignity of man, which necessarily implies the creation of social conditions which would allow him freedom to evolve along the lines of his own temperament and capacities (*svadharma*); we seek the harmony of individual efforts and social relations, not in any makeshift way, but within the framework of moral order; we seek the creative art of life by the alchemy of which human limitations are progressively translated, so that man may become the instrument of God, and is able to see Him in all and all in Him.[54]

Indian nationalism became a catalyst to overhaul the Westernized educational system for the purpose of cultural reintegration. Like Munshi's other nationalistic programs, the Bhavan also manifested his personal fulfilment and mystical vision. The Bhavan reflected the vision of sage Vyas that Munshi had perceived in one of his yogic practices at an early age, as recorded in *Shishu Ane Sakhi* (SS). Later, "In actual life the memory of the vision pursued him and it began unconsciously to shape his constructive work to a well defined pattern."[55] With Munshi's advanced age, this mystical vision repeatedly manifested itself in his novels, as evidenced by *Tapasvini*—a social novel—and *Krishnavatara*—his mythological novel. The Bhavan, which became life's mission for the Munshis, was considered by both of them as a unifying force of their lives. They both felt that they were brought together

[53] Munshi, *The Creative Art of Life*, p. 89.

[54] Munshi's preface in the Bhavan's Book University Publications as its General Editor, pp. v-vi.

[55] *Munshi* (1947), p. 494.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

to be instrumental in the reintegration of Indian culture.[56] The aim of such integration corresponded with the ultimate aim of *dharma*: the attainment of truth, joy, and beauty. Their personal search for the highest ideal of love, of the undivided soul, thus coincided with their constructive work epitomized in the Bhavan.

Today, the Bhavan has multifarious dimensions enveloping the East, the West, and diverse cultural traits of India. It has linguistic schools for Sanskrit, comparative Philology, Prakrit languages, Gujarati, Hindi, and institutes for Indian history[57] and *Bhagavat Dharma*. It also has a school of Astrology and a huge research library. Besides publishing works on Indian culture under its Book University program, the Bhavan also publishes an academic journal in English, *Bharatiya Vidya*, on Indological research. The *Bhavan's Journal* (English) and *Samarpan* (Gujarati) are the Bhavan's popular magazines.

The Bhavan also runs an Engineering college and Arts and Science colleges. Its Institute of Communication Studies teaches journalism, printing, public relations, advertising and marketing, business and industrial management as well as tourism and travel management. Munshi's inherent interest in music and dancing and flair for dramatics have found expression in 'Kala Kendra' (The Art Center). Various schools in these disciplines do research and produce artistic works. The former President of India Dr. Radhakrishnan said at the Silver Jubilee celebrations of the Bhavan:

> The Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan will keep Munshi's name enshrined in the Indian mind for many decades to come. Like a giant banyan tree, it has struck roots in many places in the country and even abroad; a truly national institution raised by non-official and cooperative endeavour, it will ever remain an embodiment of Munshi's philosophy of life and his message and as a monument to his nationalist fervor and his apostolate of the fundamental values of the Indian culture, Truth, Love, and Beauty.[58]

[56] *SSS*, p. 214 and *SS*, p. 138.

[57] Indian History Committee, the *Bharatiya Itihasa Samiti*, was established in association with G. D. Birla to publish the Series *The History and Culture of the Indian People* with R. C. Majumdar as the General Editor. *Munshi* Vol III (1957), p. 146.

[58] *Munshi* Vol IV (1957) p. 139.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Today, besides having several branches all over India, the Bhavan has a branch in London, U. K. and another in New York, U.S.A. is about to take shape. This makes Munshi's concept of education international from a different perspective than Tagore's whose Shantiniketan became a platform for the interplay of Eastern and Western philosophy and art. The Bhavan has become an institution for the dissemination of Indian culture and learning in the Western world. Unlike Tagore, Munshi emerged as an idealist and able organizer more than a thinker or *guru*.

Long before the foundation of the Bhavan, in 1924 Munshi had organized the Panchgani Educational Society which established a residential school modelled on Christian missionary schools to foster Indian community. From 1925 onwards Munshi was closely associated with Bombay University as a Member of the Senate. He fought for giving Indian languages a larger place in the University curriculum in 1927. In 1929, he conceived the idea of a public school (British connotation) for Gujaratis, which was concretized in 1938. It is interesting to note how the idealist is reflected in the basic tenets of the school. Munshi himself drafted a pledge which had to be recited like a creed every day by the pupil.[59] While preparing the manifesto of the school, Munshi correlated high ideals with mundane matters such as physical fitness, diet, table manners, uniformity of pupils' dress, phonetical pronunciation, basic courtesy, and politeness among pupils. The idealist and the practical man evidently dovetailed as evidenced by these programs.

Munshi was also responsible in the establishment of an agricultural college (modelled on the Folk Schools of Denmark), in Anand, in Gujarat State, in 1939, which developed into a university in 1947. The university today runs colleges in Arts, Sciences, and Engineering besides the Agricultural college.

It is evident that Munshi's educational activities manifested confluence of Eastern philosophies and Western sciences. The

[59] "As a pupil of..school, I pledge myself to fulfil its ideals, it is the aim of my life to serve Gujarat, India, and the Aryan culture. I will constantly strive to achieve the highest ideals of Gujarat. If need be, I shall sacrifice my all for the glory and greatness of India. In order that the *Arya sanskriti* may remain pure and inviolate, I will incessantly strive to study and to preserve it." Quoted by Joseph John, "Constructive Work" in *Munshi* (1947), pp. 491-492.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

non-Indian or non-traditional programs projected a catholicity of viable programs to build modern India. Extraction of the best from the East and West constituted the basis for Munshi's educational programs.

Other Programs:

Munshi, having been actively involved in constructive programs, both as a private citizen and government official, has expressed the basic concepts of his programs in his writings. These provide important facets of his cultural ideology. As a journalist, Munshi edited several magazines including *Young India* in English, *Gujarat* in Gujarati, and *Hans* in Hindi; the last he jointly edited with the well known Hindi author Premchand. His "Kulapati's Letters," a regular feature in the *Bhavan's Journal* and *Samarpan,* provide evidence of his journalistic ability.

As the Minister of Food and Agriculture of India in 1950, Munshi introduced programs which included a coordination of all resources: land, water, live-stock, and scientific aid and equipment. *Vanamahotsava,* a movement to revive the green glory of the forest, was enthusiastically received both at home and abroad.[60] Munshi introduced *Gosamvardhana* Bill to promote animal husbandry and greater food production.[61] His campaign of 'Grow More Food' was not merely an economic issue, but was an effort to establish unity between man and nature. Out of this emerged his theories of the dirty hand and the land army. Munshi elaborated this concept in the *Gospel of the Dirty Hand,* a scheme to bring together the rural and urban communities for economic and cultural integration.

Since my purpose is to emphasize the idealist's principles and values and their application to creative programs, I have refrained from referring to each of Munshi's non-literary writings and activities which are fully enumerated in Appendix B.

It is of utmost importance to note that the idealist, being

[60] This program was adopted as a plank in the world program of the Food & Agriculture Organization of the U. N. "Constructive Work," *Munshi* Vol. IV (1957), p. 79. Munshi's work *Land Transformation : A Philosophy, A Faith* explains the concept of this program.

[61] Munshi uses the cow in its modern socio-economic context and includes all cattle, especially the stud-bulls. In Indian politics, the cow has always played an important part, but more in a traditional context. See Norman Brown, "The Sanctity of the Cow in Hinduism," *Economic Weekly*, Feb. 16, 1964, pp. 245-255.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

impelled by the 'incessant wheel of work,' as he grew older, displayed the missionary zeal. Munshi increasingly tried to translate his abstract philosophies into concrete action, in art, politics, law, journalism, and education for the purpose of social regeneration. It is evident that in his non-literary works Munshi displayed his concern with cultural transformation of different aspects of Indian society, just as he did in his literary writings.

The Lawyer:

Munshi's career as a lawyer and writer dovetailed. His initial attempt to hide his identity by writing under a pen-name Ghanshyam was due to his skepticism about his success in either field, that he had entered practically at the same time in 1911-1913. In his autobiography *Siddhan Chadhan* (*SC*) Munshi records his rise from poverty to abundance, from his initial blunders to later accomplishments. From the tone of the narration of different legal cases in *SC* I, it is obvious that Munshi enjoyed unravelling intricacies of law as much as writing a play or a novel. The lawyer in him effortlessly mingled with the novelist and the dramatist; one became an asset to the other.

It is said Munshi dramatized his cases, and his briefs read like novels. M. C. Chagla said of him, "Munshi has a subtle and ingenious mind. The literary and the legal mind are two different things. They are rarely combined in one person. ...He could have been a dry uninteresting lawyer or a cold and calculating politician. He is neither the one nor the other. The artist in him is always peeping from behind the lawyer and the politician.[62] Munshi's legal knowledge and perception were praised by members of his profession and the judiciary.[63]

Munshi's ability to turn any point in his favour by the support of law aided him in producing effective situations and sharp dialogues in his plays and novels. His ability as a lawyer is also reflected in his characters' statesmanship and clever

[62] M. C. Chagla, "Law" in *Munshi* (1947), pp. 420-421.

[63] "Knowledge of fundamentals has become a matter of common sense to him. The judge trying his case can safely depend on him for a correct exposition of law. This does not mean that a judge or an opponent can afford to remain without vigilance. 'Munshi is always a dangerous opponent." J. M. Shelat, "Munshiji in Law," in *Munshi* (1947), p. 476.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

manipulation, the art all of his major characters seem to have mastered.

Since this is not an apt platform to describe Munshi's forensic achievements, it may suffice to say that the successful lawyer became the cementing force of many facets of Munshi's life and activity. The success brought affluence which built his self confidence. The three together enabled him to acquire the position and *power*. All his untraditional beliefs, ideas, practices got a fresh impetus that is strengthened by the power and prestige money brought. In other words, had he not succeeded as a lawyer, the plethora of his relentless energy expended in such a wide arena, would have perhaps remained a nonentity.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

CHAPTER II

Munshi's Personal Background

IMPELLED by the urge of self-expression and aided by his dramatic talent, Munshi wrote several autobiographical works that read like a drama or a novel. Munshi seemed to combine these three genres with no deliberate attempt at a synthesis. His innate creative talent produced works that manifested his self, dramatized his experiences, and told an interesting story. In fact, the same spontaneous synthesis made Munshi's novels and plays autobiographical, as elaborated in the ensuing chapters, and his autobiographies dramatized novels.

During his imprisonment in 1930, Munshi wrote an autobiography, *Shishu Ane Sakhi* 'The Child and the Comrade' (*SS*), recreating significant emotional and spiritual experiences since his childhood. Munshi describes this work as his only effortless creation, a kind of inspired poetry, though it is in prose. It is stated earlier, that Munshi wrote in all genres of literature except poetry. Maybe the pragmatist and the practical in Munshi always controlled the idealist and the visionary to ever let him write poetry. The *SS* probably is the closest Munshi came to poetry. However, the same experiences are narrated in his other autobiographical works which are alter-

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

nately factual, witty, humorous, and emotional.

Munshi serialized his life from 1887 to 1906 in *Adadhe Raste* 'Half Way' (*AR*), and from 1907 to 1922 in *Sidhan Chadhan* I and II 'Steep Ascent' (*SC*), in 1932-1933. In 1952 he published *Svapna Siddhini Shodhaman* 'In Search of Dream Realization' (*SSS*), depicting the most 'important and creative period' of his life between 1922 and 1926. *Mari Bin Javabdar Kahani* 'My Irresponsible Life Story' (*MBK*), published in 1943, records Munshi's trip to Europe in 1923 and his entanglement in a love triangle. The period after 1926 is not portrayed in any published autobiography,[1] but his "Kulapati's Letters," offering an insight into Munshi's life and mind, resemble scattered pages of an autobiography.

From his works we get a survey of Munshi's life and family heritage. He belonged to a Brahmin caste that claimed its heritage from the Vedic sage Bhrigu, and is known as the Bhargava Brahmin caste. To this line belonged the warrior Brahmins Jamadagni and his son Parashurama. These legendary Bhargava *rishis* repeatedly appear as characters in Munshi's plays and novels; as a proud Bhargava Munshi was anxious to reveal the superiority of his heritage. Parashurama's thirst for power, coupled with his aggressiveness, stimulated Munshi's imagination from childhood, and he attempted to emulate his proud ancestors in his life and works.

In later ages, Munshi's ancestors continued to remain highly active politically motivated Brahmins. Being hungry of power, they always supported the powerful—the ruler. Munshi records one of his ancestors, Vishambhardas, having helped Mohammed Tughluq in the 14th century in establishing order in Gujarat (*AR*, p. 8). The family name "Munshi" was given to his 18th century ancestor Nandalal for his scholarship in Persian by Sultan Muhammed Shah, (*AR*, p. 9). In the late 18th century, Munshi's ancestors sided with the British, against the Moghul. Later, Munshi's forefathers worked as local civil servants and lawyers under the British rule.

It seems Munshi kept the family tradition alive by being a politician and statesman both in pre and post independent

[1] Shantilal Tolat refers to "Ready material for the continuation of Munshi's autobiography covering the period after 1926" till his death, which remains unpublished. "Preface" to *Krishnavatara*, VII and VIII combined, published posthumously in 1974, p. 10.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

India. Under the British rule, he served on the legislative assemblies as an elected Indian member. In independent India, he became one of the formulators of the Constitution of the Indian Republic, and eventually became the Governor of one of the major States of India.[2]

Munshi's personality developed in congenial family surroundings. His parents' ideal husband-wife relationship was inspirational for Munshi (*AR*, pp. 143-144). Besides, Munshi's parents, like some of their ancestors, showed a talent at versification and narration. Maneklal, Munshi's father, wrote a drama in verse (*AR*, pp. 188-189); Munshi's mother Tapiben, in spite of little formal education, composed poems and wrote moral discourses. She kept diaries, not to publish, but only 'to unburden her heart.'[3] She was extremely religious and told her son stories from the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Purana*, and particularly the legends of the Bhargava, especially the sage Parashurama. When he grew up, the son recreated the stories from the *Purana* in his plays and novels.

Munshi's father had died when Munshi was in his teens. Munshi's mother, though orthodox, was liberal enough to accept her son's revolutionary religious and social views (*AR*, p. 140). She not only tolerated, but also organized, her son's second marriage with a Jain widow, Lilavati. Munshi had fallen in love with her when his first wife Atilakshmi was still alive, and Lilavati was still married. Such involvement would be considered unconventional in any society, even in modern times. But in the early twenties in India, taboos against intercaste marriages and widow remarriage made the affair more radical. Munshi glorified his mother in his creative writings since she embodied strength, independence, insight and love.[4]

Munshi was deeply influenced by his mother's religious training of offering worship to the family deity, Shiva.[5] So profound was the impact of religion on young Munshi that he imagined, at the time of his initiation ceremony to be a con-

[2] Appendix B lists all of Munshi's activities that might support this.

[3] These were eventually serialized in *Samarpan*, the Gujarati magazine published by the Bhavan, in 1960.

[4] An outstanding example of the mother-son relationship is to be found in *GN*, *RR* between Minaldevi and Jaysinhdev. Dattadevi in the *DSD* seems modelled on Munshi's mother.

[5] The seeds of this devotion became the source for the portrayal of Chaula, the temple dancer of Shiva, in *JS*. Munshi suggests this in *AR*, p. 139.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

firmed Brahmin, that he would actually attain 'divinity' on wearing the sacred thread (*AR*, p. 101). Soon the untraditional Munshi denounced some of his earlier beliefs though he never renounced his faith. Radical Munshi questioned several religious precepts and started reciting his prayers in Gujarati instead of Sanskrit. Later still he abandoned devotion to Shiva in favour of reformed Hinduism.[6] However, assertions of modernity and rationalism did not shake his profound faith in God, nor did he give up his yogic practices which helped him discipline his body and mind. He relinquished the ritual for the spiritual. After the deep impact of Patanjali's *Yogasutra*, he got interested in Ramakrishna Paramhansa; *the Gospel of Shri Ramakrishna* was his companion for several years. The deep mystical search never abandoned Munshi despite his unflinching belief in the contradictory emotion, the joy of life, that he often displayed in his life and works.

Munshi's favourite pastime was reading (*AR*, p. 146). At the age of eight he read novels of Walter Scott (*AR*, p. 117), and his imagination was triggered by repeated readings of the *Arabian Nights*. In the *AR* (p. 104 ff) he records how he often imagined himself being carried to distant lands on a flying horse, and being married to a Sultan's daughter. Another impact on this child's mind was made by the plays performed by theatrical companies. Munshi describes how he learnt elementary lessons in acting, make-up and dressing, from a company of professional actors. This initial involvement with historical novels, fantasies, and the drama persisted in Munshi's life through his youth to later life. On several occasions he reiterated how he never lost an opportunity to see plays performed by travelling theatrical companies (*AR*, pp. 127-131). While he studied in Bombay, to see a play with friends was a weekly ritual (*SC* I, p. 21). He used to express his joys and sorrows by reciting sentimental songs from popular plays (*SC* I, p. 242). *Jagatsinha*, a dramatization of Bankim's novel *Durgeshnandini*, was Munshi's favorite historical play. Its chief character, Jagat, became Munshi's ideal of heroic dreams and adventures (*AR*, pp. 128-129).

These facts are mentioned here only to emphasize the in-

[6] Munshi shows the impact of the reformist religious groups, the *Prarthana Samaj* and the *Arya Samaj*, on his thinking. *AR*, p. 192.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

fluences Munshi imbibed at an early age. Their impact and manifestations are fully discussed in the following chapters.

In *SS,* Munshi mentions a dream girl who had fascinated him when he was a young boy, and whose vision had often haunted him. Munshi was disappointed, he says in the *AR,* when at the age of thirteen he had to marry nine-year-old Atilakshmi, who was practically uneducated. Four years later in 1904, when she went to stay with him, Munshi had imagined a different woman for a wife. He had hoped for his dream girl, who would participate in his intellectual talks and share his dreams. The shock of this conventional marriage for Munshi was intense. Munshi records in *AR* how he contemplated suicide as a possible means of escape.

In 1922, Lilavati was introduced as a writer to Munshi. Her lucid character sketches of the leading personalities of the time, then unpublished, revealed her candid pen. She wrote of Munshi:

> He has great capacity for probing the hearts and minds of men. But his sparkling intellect is associated with an unconcealed egotism. He judges the world with his intellect. . . .He shuns sympathy because he thinks it lowers his dignity. But deep underneath this hard crust of intellect is hid an under-current of love flowing from the heart. Some one may have tasted it; but the waters of the spring are not accessible to all.[7]

On finishing the reading Munshi realized that his dream girl had come to life. Lilavati was invited by Munshi to assist him in editing the literary monthly, *Gujarat,* that he had started. Soon they fell in love, since Lilavati's marriage with a wealthy businessman had been a failure.

Being caught in a love triangle, Munshi faced a fierce conflict between love and duty, passion and reason. His traumatic experiences and struggles during 1922-1924 are recorded in the *MBK, SC* I and II. In the *SC* I (p. 40) he says:

> Love and the Gita, the struggle between passion and duty, my baffling effort to lighten the sorrow of the two loving women, my incessant struggle to make them happy, all these nearly drove me mad . . .Lila and I gave vent to our

[7] Included in *Munshi* Vol I (1957), p. 79. The inherent paradox in Munshi's personality was noticed by Lilavati before she ever knew him personally.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

> furious pent up passion in our letters . . .But Lakshmi! She always stood before us like an image of forbearance hewn out of frozen tears.

The passionate lover of life Munshi was not satisfied with the ideological world of platonic love. For him the self-fulfilling earthly love was also a means to attain the spiritual end in the scheme of universe. Such conviction was dramatized in *Avibhakta Atma* 'The Undivided Soul' (*AA*)—published in 1923—in the story of the Vedic ascetics, Vasishtha and Arundhati. Munshi records in the *SSS* that the *AA* was written to find release from his excruciating experience of the love triangle (*SSS*, p. 177). His Vasishtha persuades Arundhati of the desirability of marriage even for ascetics to attain the unity of the souls.

Atilakshmi, who never found a response to her flawless love, died in child birth in 1924. Lilavati's husband died of heart attack in 1926. The same year Munshi married Lilavati, commencing his journey to reach the ultimate goal with his 'undivided soul.'[8]

Three women played significant roles in Munshi's life. The noblest, according to him, was Atilakshmi in her sacrifice. The deepest was his mother's love whose understanding inspired him. Of her Munshi said, "Mother has been the guardian goddess of my life." (*SC* I, p. 149). But the most inspirational, the essence of his life, was Lilavati.[9] Munshi, being possessed by the ideas and sentiments near to his heart, presents the same material of his traumatic love experience in different forms in the SSS, SS, and the *MBK*.[10] Such a pattern of casting the same material in varied forms and perspectives is also obvious in Munshi's other literary works, establishing

[8] The concluding words of the *SS* reiterate the ideal of the Child and his Comrade to revitalize Aryavarta and fight for the freedom of the motherland. *SS*, p. 138.

[9] Lilavati was Munshi's 'undivided soul.' Munshi propounds this concept in a variety of works. In his autobiography the *SSS*, he specifically mentions Lilavati as his undivided soul, pp. 18, 34, 177 et al, and also maintains therein that he had dramatized this search in his mythological play, the *AA*. The *SS* once again portrays Munshi's joy and agony born of his love for Lilavati, as does the *MBK*. Munshi's discourse on the *Gita* contains an exposition on the sublimation of sex in pursuit of the spiritual quest, wherein Munshi refers to his physical and spiritual fulfillment through his undivided soul, Lilavati. *Bhagavad Gita and Modern Life*, pp. 179 ff.

[10] The *SSS* is an autobiographical account in prose; the *SS* is a poetic narration; and the *MBK* resembles a travel book.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

that the man was governed by the insatiable urge to repeatedly express what he intensely felt.

Munshi's autobiographies also provide an opportunity to examine his personal qualities and his own evaluations of them: a kind of dual perspective. In the *AR* Munshi says that he was extremely proud of his intellect[11] and criticizes his egocentricity. But it is difficult to judge how honest is his criticism. For he dramatizes this very trait, sheer pride, in his protagonist Aurva in *TAR*.[12] Likewise, in a confessional mood he enumerates his drawbacks in the *SSS*: "Strictness, emotionalism, artificiality and show; and the ancestral quality of insolence and adamance, over all dictatorial dominance. My basic nature is of a wild animal, but in order not to hurt the outside world, I glaze it." (*SSS*, p. 28). These words at once reveal his honesty and provide a key to understanding Munshi's nature. He was aware of his extremes and also knew how to control them, or even manipulate them. Often he gave an honest outlet to his passions in his works, letters, diaries; or conversely, wore a mask to conceal them.

Similar contrast is evident in Munshi's modesty and his desire to be praised. Very cleverly he could cover his egocentric desire to be famous, which he nurtured from his childhood (*AR*, p. 106). Understandably, the love-power ridden self of Munshi found satisfaction in the recognition of his work by others. For example, he was not content with depicting his self in art and other activities. He allowed his life and works to be recorded in print on three different birthday celebrations: the sixtieth, seventieth, and seventy-fifth.[13] Again, on such occasions in answer to the felicitations, Munshi humbly declared he had achieved nothing.[14] The tone is sincere, not a mere reflection of public modesty. It presents still another paradox in Munshi's mode of self expression: ego-satiety and awareness of his deficiencies.

Besides offering material to measure the man, Munshi's autobiographical works make an important contribution to the

[11] At the age of seventeen Munshi read Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and cultivated a disgust for people with lower intellect. *AR*, p. 203.

[12] Aurva, in the *TAR*, declares that "the weak must perish." His pride is for physical and moral strength.

[13] These works are : *Munshi* (1947), *Munshi* Vols I—IV (1957), and *Munshi at Seventy-Five* (1962).

[14] See fn. 11, Introduction.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

genre of autobiography in Gujarati literature. Dhirubhai Thaker says:

> Gandhi based his autobiography on truth, Munshi made it artistic by mingling the art of the dramatist with that of of a recorder of facts. . . .Munshi's autobiography is the longest and most interesting work of the genre in Gujarati literature.[15]

Munshi's frank and dramatized narration of events reveals an enigmatic personality of an impetuous, extrovert, egoistic man, who at the time of writing his earliest autobiography (1930) was a known literary, social, and political figure. The last, the *SSS* which is the most personal, was published in 1952 when Munshi was the Governor of Uttar Pradesh.

What could have motivated Munshi, already a celebrity, to lay his private feelings open to public? Could it be the confessional openness comparable to that in Gandhi's *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*? Though very open, Munshi's autobiographies lack the utter sincerity of Gandhi's work. Munshi's is too romantic and too dramatic to accomplish Gandhi's passion for truth. Could Munshi's motivation be the ego-satiety of the defiant man who was indifferent to the social norms; could it be the bravado of an extrovert who was out to hit back society in the face; could it be the 'rationalization after the fact' of personal, professional, or literary experiences; or could it be the creative urge of an artist to delineate what was so intensely felt? The complex personality of Munshi would elicit a 'yes' for all probabilities. Whatever his motivation, his honesty, candor and artistic exposition have been applauded even by the severest of Munshi's critics.

[15] D. Thaker, *Gujarati Sahitya ni Vikas Rekha* Vol. II, 'An Outline of the Development of Gujarati Literature' (Surat: The Popular Book Store, 1956), pp. 213.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

BVBCSMV

CHAPTER III

Munshi's Craft and Purpose

THE chronology of Munshi's writings reveals a specific division in his creative activity. Before 1947 he wrote thirteen novels, fourteen dramas, and twenty short stories. In the remaining twenty-four years of his life (1947-1971) from age 60 to 84, he wrote only three novels, one play, a fantasy, and no short stories. In the second period, there was a profusion of non-fiction, including biography, autobiography, political, historical, and cultural writings. His novels of the later period depict a deeper involvement with his theme of cultural regeneration. Nayak and Patel interpret this process of the later period as Munshi's shift from 'I' to 'They;'[1] but in fact, it was a reinforcement of self, *svadharma,* that now included others. Munshi's art objectified his ideology in his earlier novels and plays; in his later novels the predominance of self-expression made his work more ambitious in scope, but less effective in artistic achievement. Thus Munshi's reputation as a creative writer depends mainly on his writings of the former period.

Munshi's involvement with the self has been described as

[1] R. S. Nayak and S. V. Patel, *Munshi Abhyas: Jivan ane Sahitya* 'A Study of Munshi : Life and Literature' (Ahmedabad: Anada Book Depot, 1967), p. 81.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

a deliberate process of self-sculpture, which Suresh Joshi critically labels as *Atma-Rati* (self-love).[2] Munshi's novels reflect autobiographical elements. His vision and his objectifying agent, art, were well syncretized in his personality. Munshi says:

> Experience and expression are inextricably interwoven in my life. ...If I get an idea I must express it in writing otherwise I feel restless. Wielding mental control if I supress my idea and refrain from exposition, I must jot it in my diary or share it with my wife or a close friend; until I accomplish this I remain agitated.[3]

Since Munshi was a bundle of paradoxes and was involved in self-expression, his works reflected conflicting points of view, lending it the vital dramatic element. The emerging ambivalence has been rated as inconsistency by critics.[4] I have coordinated the writer, the lawyer, and the ideologist in Munshi to establish a comprehensive understanding of his works.

The lawyer-statesman detected the point of conflict providing the core of drama; the artist wove effective dialogues and structured the plot portraying his favourite theme; and the man projected his personal traits in his characters and the resolution of the conflict. However, the mingling of these elements being spontaneous, all of them did not blend with the same consistency, often resulting in uneven artistic accomplishments.

The prevailing trends in contemporary life left Munshi's romantic urge unsatisfied, turning him to the delineation of the past in its relevance to the present. Munshi's famous historical novels, especially the trio[5] dealing with the Chalukyan age of the ninth and twelfth century Gujarat, manifest Munshi's art at its best. Yashvant Shukla says:

> ...One could merely sigh witnessing the political subju-

[2] Quoted by Nayak and Patel, p. 59.

[3] In *Kesuda*, quoted by Nayak and Patel, p. 12.

[4] For example Chandrakant Mehta in "*Munshi no Pranalikavad*" establishes that Munshi was a conventionalist in his writings. He cites examples to substantiate this contention from Munshi's favourable treatment of traditional values, implying that Munshi was not a radical writer. Address at the 21st Gujarati Literary Convention, referred to by Nayak and Patel, p. 243.

[5] The trio referred to here are three historical novels *Patan ni Prabhuta*, *Gujarat no Nath*, and *Rajadhiraj*. *Prithvi Vallabh* is another novel with Munshi's artistic excellence. He acquired a definitive place in Gujarati novels with his novels. This is substantiated in the *Oriental Dictionary of Literature* in the section on Gujarati 'Navalkatha' edited by Prusek, p. 105.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

> gation of the people at that time. Munshi was not the type. He was a worshipper of power. ...His contemporary life was uncongenial for the vision of the beautiful world he wanted to recreate. That life was impotent, miserable, and dwarfish; to create powerful, joyful, and sublime world out of these would involve a strife with probability. To glide into the past was convenient, thereby bypassing artistic conviction. Munshi was fascinated by the Greek and the Roman civilizations and their heroic personages. To enact a world like theirs, Munshi turned to the past history. He delineated in his own fashion, the Solanki age of Gujarat and the golden age of Aryavarta. History was a means, 'a grain of salt' for taste; the end was the story, the art, the ideology.[6]

Since Munshi's art represented a process of self realization, he used it to compensate for the deficiencies of actual life. The past provided the ideals to resolve the problems of the present and inculcate national pride. From his first historical novels written between 1917-1920 to his mythological last novel *Krishnavatara* in 1960-1971, Munshi exhibited a repeated urge to go back to the past.

As established earlier, Munshi's love for India's past was part of the nationalist spirit prevalent at the time. He wanted to arouse pride and faith in India's past through his historical novels in which he dramatized 'realism' with a different perspective. He reinterpreted the past in the frame of modernity, a favorite involvement of the literary figures of the Indian Renaissance. R. C. Majumdar comments on the attempts of the nationalist historians and artists to dig the roots of patriotism in one's own past. He says, "This may be generalized as a deliberate reinterpretation of Indian history in order to infuse enthusiasm in the fight for freedom and sustain or strengthen the cherished creeds and slogans of the Indian political leaders."[7] Of this urge to recreate the past, Munshi said, "Bankim revived the memory of the heroism of the *sanyasi* rebellion. Both he and Dwijendralal Roy resurrected Rajput heroism. *Not* that such authors *intentionally set out to foster*

[6] Quoted by D. Jadeja in "Munshi ni Navalkathao ma Itihasa Tatva" (Historical Element in Munshi's Novels) in *Granth*, 94-95, p. 109.

[7] R. C. Majumdar, "Nationalist Historians" in *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, ed., C. H. Philips (New York : 1961), p. 425.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

national or regional pride. They become the *spontaneous voices of the coming spring*. The same perhaps was the case with me."[8] Munshi emphasizes the *spontaneity* of the artist's response whereas Majumdar describes it as a *deliberate* effort to reinterpret history. In his characteristic way, Munshi romanticizes the nationalist writer's urge.

With his historical novels Munshi was not creating a new genre in Gujarati literature. In fact, the Gujarati novel had begun its history with a historical novel *Karan Ghelo* (1866) by Nandashankar. Its success had led other writers to this literary genre. Mahipatram's *Vanaraj Chavdo* (1881) and *Sadhra Jesang* (1881) were successful attempts at depicting the past. Influenced by Western historical fiction, these writings had remained scholarly but stiff. Munshi made the historical novel vibrant with characters exuding vigor and life.

Munshi's historical trilogy depicts consolidation of Gujarat in the days of the Chalukyan kings. The *JS* and the *BP* deal with the fall of the Chalukyas. Though set in the past, the novels are realistic both in their relevance to the contemporary scene and in their portrayal of the fundamental human passions of love and power through lifelike characters and intricate plots. The dead pages of Gujarat's history became a real experience for the people through Munshi's novels. The trilogy, providing heroic models, strongly appealed to the contemporary Gujaratis. Some of the characters in the novels, says Narasimharao, which were mere names before, have now found a 'fond and permanent place in popular imagination.'[9]

Another historical novel, *Prithvi Vallabh* (*PV*) unfolds the story of the romantic lover and king. This story of Munj is probably the most popular novel of Munshi, even outside Gujarati literature. The book has been translated in various other languages of India as well as English; and it has been staged and screened in Hindi. Munshi is apt at characterizing a sage as effectively as a lover. His Chanakya although a Machiavellian in the *BHK*, is also a Brahminical sage whose object was to resort to revolution for the purpose of a better political situation.

Munshi did not restrict himself to the history of Gujarat

[8] *Munshi* Vol. IV (1957), p. 25. Emphasis mine.

[9] 'Preface' to *Gujarat no Nath*, p. 14.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

and Central India; he delved into India's antiquity in his mythological works. Munshi researched and recreated the time of the *Rigveda Samhita* to project it into modernity.[10]

He wove the plots of his works around the families of Bhrigu, Vasishtha, and Vishvamitra. The conciliation between antiquity and modernity, separated by thousands of years, was not easy to attain. Munshi projected contemporary problems like discrimination against the untouchables, fight for political independence, and women's equality with men into Vedic stories. (See chapter IV.)

In all these works, it was not Munshi's desire to be a scholar, an archaeologist, or a historian. He was a romantic historian who was not intolerant of the artist in him; in fact, the historian helped the artist to fictionalize history. Munshi was often criticized for taking liberties with history, but he was only using the writer's privilege, as did Shakespeare and Scott. Munshi said, "It is impossible to look upon a historical novel as anything but a romantic speculation."[11] Munshi's historical romances exercised the same spell over Gujarat as did the *Waverly* novels of Scott over Britain. Of his "remarkable contribution" Shridharani says, "Mahatma Gandhi made Gujarat proud in its present tense by creating heroes out of clay. Munshi made Gujarat proud in its past tense by revealing heroes from under the archaeological dust."[12]

[10] Impelled by the 'self-assigned mission to visualize and let others envision' the Vedic and 'pre-Vedic' times, Munshi decided to write an epic drama, a *mahanataka*, in twelve parts. He completed portraying his 'dreams of Super-men and Super-events' between 1922-1946 having changed the original plan several times. Munshi wanted to write all stories in the drama form, but three of these were written in the novel form. However, Munshi did not publicize his plan till the 'preface' to *LOM* in 1945. The same is more fully elaborated in the 'Preface' to the *BHP* in 1946, from which the following details are taken, (*BHP*, pp. 6-9). Besides, the works were not written in the same chronology as indicated below. Hence, it is difficult to ascertain if Munshi concretized the concept of the *mahanataka* before or after writing these plays and novels.

Munshi divides these stories into four cantos. The first canto deals with stories that had become 'a tradition' in the Rig Vedic times. Munshi calls them 'pre-Vedic'. Under this category, Munshi lists the *PS*, the *AA*, and the *PPJ*.

The second canto depicts the beginning of 'the Rig Vedic times' capsulized in the *LOP* I (novel), and II, III, IV (drama).

The third canto comprises the 'real Rig Vedic times' depicted in the *LOM*, a novel.

The fourth canto includes the *BHP* (novel) and the *TAR* (drama) representing the period between the time of the *Rig Veda* and that of the *Brahmanas*.

[11] Munshi, *Gujarat and Its Literature* (Calcutta: Longmans, Green & Co., Ltd., 1935), p. 326.

[12] Krishnalal Shridharani, "Man and His Message" in *Munshi*, (1947), p. 515.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Historical truth is ambivalent, because at its best it is speculative or interpretative. Therefore Munshi contends "A bygone age, as it actually was, can never be created by a literary artist. He can treat the past either as an alien world and its men but myths, and occupy himself with hauling its upholstery into the present; or it can project the drama of life around him on the screen of the past."[13] Munshi chooses the last, and projects the drama of the present on the past.

Munshi's concept of the national hero emerged from the vision of his *svadharma*. As is discussed earlier, Munshi's belief in the responsibility of the intellectual minority to lead the masses creates the vision of his heroic men and women. Human grandeur and national dignity arose, for Munshi, from the recognition of Aryan greatness that can be converted into a force. It becomes the governing force of his characters. "When man loses himself in one idea around which his individuality revolves, he becomes refulgent, powerful . . .He becomes an elemental force."[14] What R. I. Patel says of Munshi's later Vedic novels is applicable to his entire literary activity, employed in revitalizing Aryan culture.

> He has managed to find it (the national faith of India) in Aryan culture; and he has proclaimed his faith with messianic zeal. In this respect he invites comparison with Iqbal who prescribed Pan-Islamism as a sovereign cure for materialism, the destructive element that is eating out the heart and soul of man inspired and enslaved by the triumph of science in the West and the consequent decline of religion all over the world. Munshi and Iqbal are psychologically significant phenomena in India. The tension of bitter communal politics, dynamic temperaments seeking fulfilment in a sense of power, and the deep wounds inflicted by the humiliation of actual or virtual subjection to the West has a great deal to do with the militant tone in which they have preached their respective faiths. Militant Islam and Hindu Revivalism as represented by Iqbal and Munshi respectively are really narrow faiths masquerading as universal religion.[15]

[13] Munshi, *Gujarat and Its Literature*, pp. 326-327.

[14] Munshi, *Thodank Rasadarshano* (Ahmedabad : 1933), p. 13.

[15] R. I. Patel, *The Novels of Munshi* (Surat : Chunilal Gandhi Vidya Bhavan, 1959), p. 54.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

In the process of delineation of idealism, Munshi the dramatist reveals an apparent ambivalence that Iqbal the poet does not. In fact, Munshi's awareness of a conflicting ideology and an apparent detachment made him less a partisan than Iqbal, enabling him to write drama. What the drama missed was the cosmic vision, profundity of total vision, since Munshi's works were limited by his 'messianic zeal,' narrow perception and personal traits.

To this Aryan ideal of struggling and suffering through *tapas* (penance) and *tyaga* (renunciation) is added Nietzsche's ideal of superman who operates beyond the standard of morality, good or evil, in pursuit of his objective. Munshi's characters, like him, reveal this intense passion for reaching the goal by any means. Since Munshi's concept of a national hero was consistent with that of a 'superman,' his characters are controlled by the precept, "A dangerous life is far nobler than passive insipidity."[16] Incited by *love* and *power*, Munshi's characters live dangerously; they might be defeated, but they do not indulge in other-worldly sentimentalism, or brood over, failures. Munshi records in his autobiography how he disciplined himself against haunting ideas of suicide and sentimental shedding of tears.[17] His characters strike the note of struggle, achievement, optimism and victory.

Munjal (*PP, GN, RR*), Munj (*PV*), Kak, Manjri, Jaysinh (*GN, RR*), Devyani, Shukracharya (*PS*), all pass through their moments of defeat but emerge with self-confidence to live or die heroically. It is not accidental that Munshi did not write tragedy.[18] Munj in *PV* dies, but it is a heroic death smilingly embraced. There is no lament, repentance, a sense of loss, or of defeat by destiny, so familiar in the Western concept of tragedy, in the final moments of Munj's life. Death is yet another sleep, an incidental occurrence for Munshi, and not indicative of the tragic vision. Chandragupta in the *DSD* personifies the concept of such an ideal hero. His moments of possible death are replete with sentiments of heroism and love. Munj (*PV*) and Ramagupta (*DSD*) are two opposite manifes-

[16] J. John, "Constructive Work" in *Munshi* (1947), p. 481.

[17] *SC* I, pp. 96-99, *AR*, pp. 213-216.

[18] *Tarpan* comes close to tragedy. Since Munshi moulded life by thought and thought by life, and triumphed over the death-wish by personal efforts, he did not allow death to overwhelm or overpower his serious characters.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

tations of the 'joy of life.' Both meet with destruction, but Munj dies a heroic death, Ramagupta a coward's an anti-hero's. They both are unique in their humanness and passion for pleasure in any situation of life. But while Munj commands admiration as a hero, Ramagupta at best is tolerated, at worst condemned to the ignoble death of a villain. Such variance underlines Munshi's ability to explore several possibilities, even contradictory, of handling the same emotion, idea or experience.

In the artistic process, Munshi's antithetical traits developed into different characters, generating conflicting ideologies or a semblance of paradox that became the core of drama. His novels became popular because of dramatic depiction of characters and plot, which he learnt from the literary writers of the West. "He has carefully cultivated the art of presenting a *romantic story* in a *dramatic manner*."[19] This nationalist, a votary of anti-Westernism, gracefully accepted his indebtedness to Western writers like Carlyle, De Quincey, Hugo, Scott and Dumas (*AR*, pp. 130-132 and 184). Munshi expressed his ambivalent reaction to this influence in 1933 in *SC* I:

> English language is the greatest shackle of foreign rule. Unfortunately, we do not get recognition in our own land without the knowledge of this foreign language. The best years of my life I spent in trying to tighten these handcuffs to fit me well. I benefited by it. Learning this foreign language, I imbibed some fundamental truths about style, genre, repartee, dialogues; and I established acquaintance with the masters of world literature. (*SC* I, p. 116).

In *AR* Munshi records his admiration for Dumas who was his model in the art of story-telling.[20]

Munshi was not the first to be influenced by Western literary models. At its inception, the novel in Gujarati had developed under the impact of English literature. It was a British Educational Inspector who inspired Nandashankar to write *Karan Ghelo* (1866) in imitation of Walter Scott. The first Gujarati drama (1851) was an adaptation of Aristophanes'

[19] R. I. Patel, p. 3. Emphasis mine.

[20] *AR*, pp. 130-132. It is suggested that these comments may have resulted from prior accusations of plagiarism from Dumas. Dawalpura, "Munshi ni Atmakathama Kalatatva" (The Art in Munshi's Autobiography) in *Granth*, p. 104.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Plutus. Original works, translations, and adaptations from English and Indian writings abounded in the latter half of the nineteenth century.[21] The year of Munshi's birth, 1887, saw the rise of a monumental novel, *Saraswatichandra,* by Govardhanram Tripathi. This novel, in four volumes, is primarily a philosophical work with a blend of realism and idealism. A variety of vivid characters, powerful dialogues and learned style made it the most popular novel till the spell was broken by Munshi's first novel *Ver ni Vasulat* in 1913.[22] *Saraswatichandra* is still considered a classic in Gujarati literature, although it is deficient as a novel because of the lack of proportionate co-ordination between philosophy and the novelist's art.

Munshi made a significant contribution to Gujarati literature by extending the limits of the novel in technique and treatment of the material. He created the hero, who was not a philosopher living in airy ideologies, as were those of Tripathi and Nanalal, but a practical man throbbing with life, striving to attain his goals. Munshi coordinated philosophy and life in his art.

Before Munshi, the Gujarati novel had to struggle against the indigenous romantic tradition of rambling tales frequently interrupted by long-winded, conventional and lifeless descriptions. These were padded with incidental reflections. Munshi cast off these trimmings and skillfully fashioned his stories into neatly woven plots, with an eye to economy of details, replete with apt dialogues in everyday language. R. I. Patel says, "He strikes a balance among the narrative, the dramatic, the descriptive, and the reflective elements of the Gujarati novel by cutting... (them) ...down to the minimum... In his hands, therefore, the Gujarati novel ceases to be a tentative attempt at the novel and becomes the novel indeed."[23] The characteristic aspects of Munshi's dramatic technique in his novels may be summarized here and will be more fully discussed in the ensuing chapters in relation to his drama.

—Well knit plot and quick action for the depiction of the theme emanating from personal ideology.

—Realistic, lively, and engrossing dialogue in non-pedantic language.

[21] K. M. Jhaveri, *Further Milestones in Gujarati Literature,* 2nd ed. Chapters on Drama & Fiction, pp. 197-247, 248-304.

[22] Nayak and Patel, p. 35. [23] R. I. Patel, p. 4.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

—Depiction of atmosphere befitting the action in fewest possible details.

—Vivid interaction of characters and action.

—Accurate delineation of character's inner self and his/her motivations.

—Smooth flow of absorbing prose style.

These aspects are characteristic of the dramatic technique; and they constitute the basis of Munshi's art. Munshi's novels can be adapted into drama. His *Prithvi Vallabh* can be compared with John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* in its dramatic, almost cinematographic, technique. Some of Munshi's works were filmed which also indicates a correlation between his art as a novelist and as a dramatist. There was no specific pattern in his choice or treatment of material for the novel or the drama. Because of the similarity of his techniques in both, he wrote some works as part novel, part play (*LOP*); or wrote a short story which he later adapted as a drama. (See chapter IV.)

Despite the fact that dramatic technique was central to Munshi's art, he practically abandoned the drama in favor of the novel after 1946. In his preface to *Lomaharshini* (1945) he attributes this to the limited taste of the Gujarati reading public, his audience. He says,... "I realized that the drama is not an easy form for the Gujarati public to enjoy. *Deve Didheli* was poorly received. So I decided to write the subsequent parts of this *Mahanataka* (the epic drama) in the novel form... *Lomaharshini* and *Bhagavān Parashurama.*"[24]

Is it the limitation of Munshi's art or his audience? *LOP* Part 1 was already written as a novel after the three plays, the *PS*, the *AA*, and the *PPJ* in this series of the epic-drama. The next three parts, *LOP* 2, 3, 4, are again in the dramatic form. Munshi's other social and mythological plays had been well received by the Gujarati audience. It seems that Munshi was undetermined about the method of resolving the tension between the artist and the man in him. The Vedic romances dealing with Aryan culture were dearest to his heart, increasingly more so as he grew older, resisting dramatic detachment more and more. He, therefore, concentrated on depicting such themes in the novel and relinquished the drama toward the end of his first, more creative period. The freer form of the novel

[24] Preface, *LOM*, p. 6.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

was more congenial to Munshi's increasingly subjective themes of cultural regeneration. His dramatic talent gradually diminished, though he remained a successful story teller till the end. In abandoning the drama, Munshi perhaps accepted and revealed the limitation of his art, though in a lawyer-like manner, he attributed it to the Gujarati audience. Whatever be the motivation, the move was judicious.

Munshi's heroic characters have often been accused of dubious moral values. In their pursuit of a noble objective, they often become violent, aggressive and ruthless. Some of his outstanding characters are: Parashurama (*BHP*), Vishnugupta (*BHK*), Munjal (*PP*, *GN*, *RR*), Aurva (*TAR*), Krishna (*KA*). The ends justified the means in Munshi's system of values, in life and his writings. Judged by the contemporary moral values of the Gandhian era in Gujarati literature, Munshi's ideal characters exhibited irreconcilable contradiction for the readers. His simultaneous appreciation of uncompromising moralist Gandhi and Machiavellian Vishnugupta (Chanakya/Kautilya) intrigued many, as both were often represented in the same work through different characters, or in paradoxical traits of the same character.[25] Munshi was challenged for the moral implications of his writings.

Such antithesis led R. I. Patel to conclude, "Being a victim of contradictory feelings and impulses, Munshi is like a house divided against itself... He cannot hold the balance even; nor can he look at things *sub specie aeternitatis*. Whatever he admires, he admires with a sentimental flourish; whatever he condemns, he condemns with a characteristic lack of sensitiveness and understanding."[26] His art was governed by the passionate man in him.

In the resolution of the tension in his works Munshi often lacked dramatic detachment. The conflict was resolved by his personal beliefs, not by the inevitable outcome of interaction between characters and incidents. This became more obvious with his later novels, but he was at his best in his earlier historical romances, revealing a balancing force of objectivity. It

[25] In *Tapasvini* various characters represent antithetical traits: East-West, materialism-spiritualism, past-present, idealism-realism. In the *PS*, Shukracharya stands for freedom and democratic principle of equality, but is wedded to pure violence, indicating a combination of Gandhian and Kautilyan attributes.

[26] R. I. Patel, p. 75.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

seems, with his continued success in the legal profession, literary activities and in public life, Munshi's faith in his way of thinking deepened. His later works, *Tapasvini* and *Krishnavatara,* are lesser works of art, but more representative of Munshi the man.

Munshi's very important contribution to Gujarati literature is in the field of language. With the use of colloquial or everyday language he brought literature closer to life, shifting it away from Sanskritized, pedantic diction. Several novelists before Munshi had tried to evolve a language suitable to the genre. Earliest among them was Nandashankar who tried to blend the pedantic with the common language without much success.[27] Tripathi did not develop a style or a language for his novel; he used an essayist's language that well suited his reflective novel. Munshi utilized sophisticated, spoken Gujarati of the educated class, along with essentially technical words needed to recreate an atmosphere of the past in his historical and mythological works. For social novels and plays Munshi integrated regional peculiarities of the spoken Gujarati in cities like Surat, Broach and Bombay, with which he was familiar. "These regions have supplied to my style, their racy elements which so horrified the pursuits from North Gujarat."[28]

Effective usage of the spoken language rendered Munshi's works realistic and humorous, especially his social plays that created a medley of frolic by depicting dialectical and linguistic variations. Munshi's educated audience all over Gujarat would identify and enjoy the regional modes of expression, but the rival group of North Gujarat was sarcastic about Munshi's unconventional flippancy of subject and style. Munshi's ideal had been: "Life, in its reality alone, is sacred to me, not so much the laws made to bind it."[29] However, his love of colloquial realistic expressions, extended to the dialogues of *rishis* in his mythological and historical works, generated inconsistency in characterization.[30] Despite such artistic defi-

[27] Dipak Mehta, "Munshi ni Navalkatha ni Bhasha: Ek Manoyatna." (The Language of Munshi's Novel : An Exercise) in *Granth*, pp. 138-140.

[28] Munshi refers to a literary squabble that his controversial works had created in his time. *Munshi* (1947), p. 18.

[29] "Landmark Letters" in *Munshi* (1947), p. 20.

[30] Yajnavalkya's character in the *DSD* lacks dignity in view of the casualness of his expression in elucidating profound issues of polity and *dharma*. For a fuller discussion of this character, see the chapter on the Critical Analysis of the *DSD*.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

ciencies, Munshi's use of the language revolutionized literary Gujarati.

Commenting on Munshi's linguistic contribution V. R. Trivedi says, "Exactness, smoothness, and naturalness in modern (Gujarati) prose should be attributed to folk literature, Gandhi, and Munshi."[31] Gandhi's simple style reflected his personality, serene, controlled, and unadorned. It was *satvika* (pure). Munshi's was passionate, vigorous, and unconventional, it was *rajasi*, reflecting the 'joy of life.'[32] It is interesting that the Gujarati language was revolutionized by two such different individuals as Gandhi and Munshi, both of whom had a different ability to use Gujarati because of their inadequate formal training in it.[33] Ironically, they merely used Gujarati afresh for self-expression and unconsciously established a tradition. Munshi was aware of his occasional syntactical and grammatical lapses and love of verbosity for glamorous effect. His own evaluation of his deficiencies concludes that he had limitations of style, but it also reveals his self-analytical approach.

Recent critics have considered Munshi's language inadequate to portray the inner complexities of human mind and motivations,[34] though it was very suitable for the kind of dramatic delineation of conflicting passions and plots that he developed. Criticism of Munshi's inadequacy of style reflects a negative attitude. Since Munshi roused people's expectations as a revolutionizing force, he was criticized for not achieving more than he did. This attitude does not, however, invalidate Munshi's positive contribution.

An overall view of Munshi's literary achievements and contribution to Gujarati literature places him close to Walter Scott. Like Scott, Munshi is primarily considered a historical romanticist. Any discussion of the historical novel in Guja-

[31] V. R. Trivedi quoted by Suhasi, *Sahityakar Kanaiyalal Munshi* 'Kanaiyalal Munshi, a Litterateur' (Surat : Rashtrabhasha Pustak Mandir, 1975), p. 114.

[32] Nayak and Patel use two Gujarati words *satvaguni* (of the quality of pure spirit) and *rajoguni* (of the quality of passion), p. 52.

[33] Gandhi had formal training in English and Sanskrit, but not in Gujarati. M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Boston : Beacon Press, 1957), p. 16. Written originally in Gujarati (1927); also "Foreword" to Munshi, *Gujarat and Its Literature*, p. V. Munshi says, "My readings in literature excluded Gujarati literature.." and referred to "my abysmal ignorance of Gujarati." *SC* I, p. 99.

[34] Yashvant Doshi, "Kanaiyalal Munshi : Adhyayan na Ketlak Prashno" (Kanaiyalal Munshi : Some Problems for Study) in *Granth*, pp. 12-16.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

rati invariably pivots around Munshi's works. V. S. Pritchett's observation on Scott is applicable to Munshi. He said that the historical passion was the engine of Scott's impulse.[35] The catalyst of Munshi's vision was his historic passion that persisted till the end of his life. As late as 1962 Mansukhlal Jhaveri said, "Munshi has not cast off his adolescence."[36] What is important is to examine where this engine of historic passion took the writers. Walter Allen maintains that we would miss Scott's real greatness if we considered him just as a historical novelist, and not as a creator of palpable characters.[37] Not only is there a close parallel between Scott and Munshi in their art of characterization, the two resemble in inviting similar criticism. Munshi's art reveals similar ambiguous outwardness of characters, as evident in Scott's,[38] so often admired by contemporary critics as 'psychological inner reality' and attacked by later critics as mere illusion of reality, a clarity of an outline of a diagram."[39] What E. M. Foster said about Scott is also true of Munshi: "Scott is a novelist about whom we shall violently divide."[40] Unlike Scott, Munshi did not shy away from the portrayal of private emotions, but his characters revolved around his own experiences of *love* and *power*. Munshi's attitude toward female characters needs a special mention and understanding.

Munshi's female characters reveal an independent attitude. They stand on an equal level by the side of, not behind, men. They confront men with equal vigor without losing their femininity. In fact, their love and devotion strengthen their inherent powers to dominate, often daring men's ability to match theirs. The encounters between Munshi's men and women enkindle sparkling dialogue and intense drama. His female characters often overshadow their male counterparts in his social novels and plays, creating an artistic imbalance. Devyani, Lopamudra, and Lomaharshini, who conceptualize the

[35] V. S. Pritchett, *The Living Novel* (London : Chatto & Windus, 1967, copyright, 1946), p. 44.

[36] Mansukhlal Jhaveri, *Abhigama* "Approach" (Bombay : Chandra Prakashan, 1966), p. 123.

[37] Walter Allen, *The English Novel* (Middlesex : Penguin, 1958), p. 118.

[38] Ibid., p. 120.

[39] Suresh Joshi, *Kshitij*, 1963, uses the phrases 'Clarity of an outline of a diagram' and 'An illusion of life and activity in Munshi's works,' quoted by Nayak and Patel, p. 60.

[40] Walter Allen, p. 118.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

ideal of womanhood in Munshi's mythological plays; Mrinal, Minal, and Manjri in his historical novels; and Dhruvadevi in his historical play are but a few of Munshi's powerful female characters. Tanman and Rajba in his social novels are central characters and they overshadow their male counterparts. These two women captured the minds of the Gujarati public as the young and the old recognized their 'dream girls' in them.[41]

Munshi's portrayal of women, however, does show a conflicting dimension of his personality. In the ultimate resolution of conflict between individualistic women and men, in almost all of Munshi's works, he makes his women yield to men. In the name of love they relinquish their ego. According to Munshi, they are supposed to find their identities by merging them with men's through the alchemy of *love*. The *power* of men invariably defeats that of women. This is not artistically developed, but emerges as a reflection of Munshi's will. For him, women's surrender to men does not reflect their defeat, but the victory of *mutual love,* one of the characteristic phases of Munshi's theme of love.

This theme is capsulized repeatedly by Munshi, with the exceptions of Devyani, who bows to no one (neither the lover, the husband, nor the father), and Chaula, who chooses to surrender only to God, not to man. Barring these two, all of Munshi's women characters yield to men in the end. The fact that Munshi's personality was governed by the dual force, explains this attitude toward women. Lilavati's analysis of his personality provides a relevant clue. In 1922, before she married Munshi, she wrote to him:

> Somehow I have always felt that you do not have a good opinion of women. It is true that the women of your imaginary world are charming, but there you experience the artist's joy of creation. When this source of inspiration (woman) encounters you in actual life, it seems, you seldom realize that you owe them anything else but tantalizing or teasing them or reducing them to tears. May be you do not do this out of unkindness, but because you lack an understanding of womanhood. At least I can see that

[41] Munshi called his first memorable woman character Tanman (*VV*, 1913), a replica of his 'dream girl.'

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

the woman has not been exiled from the hearts of Gujarati novelists.[42]

Munshi's paradoxical attitude also had a traditional frame of reference. Male chauvinistic resolution of the man-woman relationships in Munshi's works seemed to emerge from his own domineering personality and the traditionally ambivalent attitude to women in Indian culture.[43] While he revelled in the vivid portrayal of the strength of women, he could not let them be superior in the end. It seems that a strong attraction for and a desire to overcome the feminine *power* simultaneously operated in Munshi's psyche. The love-power complex tended to alternately challenge his tenderness and impetuosity.

Munshi's ego manifested in his works in two ways: realistic depiction of personal experiences and emotions, and wish fulfilment. Almost all his works reflect either or both of these characteristics. To cite, Sudarshan in the *SV* is Munshi's self projection. He is a young man in search of an ideal, he traverses the same path of quest, patriotic mysticism and disillusioned idealism as Munshi did. Tanman in the *VV* on the other hand, being Munshi's dream girl, represents the other category, wish fulfilment. His dream girl, a replica of Lilavati, is also depicted in the character of Sakhi in the *SS*.

Several of Munshi's characters have the stamp of his statesmanship and manoeuvering practicality. Most outstanding among them is Kāk, the imaginary character in *GN* and *RR*, in whom Munshi blends art, imagination, and projection of self in an ideal manner. Munshi's ability to organize, his tenacity and quick eye for an opportunity are hallmarks of almost all of his leading characters. Chief among them are, Krishna (*KA*), Chanakya (*BHK*), and Munjal (*PP, GN, RR*). In the *DSD*, Chandragupta also recognizes his opportunity to win; Ravī in *TAP* and Krishna in *KA* are opportunists capable of manoeuvering with subtlety and shrewdness. Munshi's works tend to lose freshness by the recreation of similar heroic men and women, repeated portrayal of self and personal theme,

[42] *SSS*, p. 4. I have slightly deviated from a literal translation of this passage, because cryptic usage renders the meaning unintelligible.

[43] A. T. Embree, ed., *The Hindu Tradition* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), p. 86. Embree distinguishes the dual image of women in the ancient Indian culture.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Two sets of novels, written in the early and late periods in his career, carrying striking similarity of themes and material exemplify this. One set belongs to the genre of social novels, another to mythological: (i) *SV* (1924) & *TAP* (1957-1958) and (ii) *BHP* (1946) & *KA* (1960-71). The two social novels depict the period of India's movement of independence and rise of nationalism. While the *SV* pivots around one character, Sudarshan, and his life between 1906 to 1908, the *TAP* is wider in range of time, people and ideology enveloping the history of India from 1857 to 1937. Munshi's ideology regarding antitheses between East-West, spiritualism-materialism, past-present, is disseminated into Uday, Sheela, Alice, Rajba, Ravi, and Ganapatishankar. The *TAP* is cast on a grander scale and is more diversified than the *SV*. Munshi's vision in the *TAP* displays a semblance of mature perception, whereas the *SV*, as the title suggests (The Dreamer), presents a dreamer's view.

The progress from the *SV* to the *TAP* indicates development from quest to realization, search to confirmed ideology; the *TAP* reiterates Munshi's faith in Aryan culture, the East, and spiritualism. Both novels offer a glimpse into Munshi's conflicting emotions and feelings, but while the *SV* is more dramatic, the *TAP* blends reflective narration with the dramatic. Of the *TAP* R. I. Patel says, "Munshi is inclined to be dogmatic and hence superficial in dealing with conflicting values... (But) it is probably the most significant novel of Munshi. It is a kind of resume of all that he has thought and felt and suffered."[44]

A similar pattern is evident in the *BHP* (1946) and the *KA* (1960-1971). In these mythological romances Munshi depicts the culminating concept of his ideal hero epitomized in Parashurama, Krishna, and Veda Vyasa. In his preface to the *BHP* Munshi elaborates this:

> He was fierce, invincible, valorous, and resolute victor. Before the impact of the worship of Krishna on Hindu writers... (Parashurama) who bereft the world of *Kshatriyas,* had enslaved the imagination of poets. The manner in which Sri Krishna pervades today in life and literature of Aryavarta, before the fourth and fifth centuries A. D. Parashurama occupied such position. After him

[44] R. I. Patel, pp. 83-84.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

> when valor subsided, and the passion for pleasure increased, the need for philosophy, for *bhakti* arose. Krishna then attained Parashurama's place. Then he (Krishna), a human being, was deified as Vishnu; he became god instead of being a warrior and a wrestler; and considered chief among yogins instead of a statesman; considered a self-controlled celibate instead of a pleasure seeker.[45]

This elaboration clearly indicates unconventional interpretation of traditions in 'deification' of Parashurama and 'humanization' of Krishna, revealing a blend of romance and realism. Munshi's natural enthusiasm to paint a Bhargava, his ancestor, as an embodiment of heroism is obvious. Anticipating this charge, Munshi tries to clarify in the preface of the *BHP*, that Parashurama was a symbol of Aryan culture and not of Bhargava Brahmin cult. Aurva (*TAR*), Chyavana (*PPJ*), Shukracharya (*PS*), are some other Bhargava protagonists that Munshi portrays with pride in his mythological plays. In fact, Munshi's sentimentalism for the Bhargavas is an extension of his self-love. "To appreciate Munshi's fervent picture of Aryavarta and its ideals as he understands them, the reader has to be an ardent Hindu, or better still a proud Brahmin, preferably a Bhargava Brahmin, and best of all he has to be Munshi himself."[46] Although Munshi's works were popular, the underlying self-love could not be but evident to a perceptive reader.

Techniques of plot and characterization in the *BHP* and *KA* are very similar. The latter, however, by its sprawling narration in eight volumes loses the firm texture of the former. But each volume of the *KA* may be individually compared with the *BHP* in structure. Munshi adopts the same methods to depict the charm and superhuman qualities of both Parashurama and Krishna. They both are statesmanly, like Munshi's other heroes, they both exhibit a superior political insight, subtle scheming, and ability to convince others.

Like the other late novel *TAP*, *KA* focuses on Munshi the man, but there is a difference. *TAP* concentrates on Munshi's evaluation of social and cultural values. In *KA*, Krishna embodies an ideal of a lover, son, statesman, friend, and a concerned guide of fellow men. He is an executor of new programs and a pioneer of new traditions, demolishing the old

[45] 'Preface' to the *BHP*, p. 16. [46] R. I. Patel, p. 56.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

ones,[47] much as Munshi was. Krishna as a regenerating force of culture shares his glory with Veda Vyasa in this novel. Krishna is at once an object of loving devotion and emulation as well as a reflector of Munshi's self-image.

Munshi maintains that before Krishna was deified, Veda Vyasa (Krishna Dwaipayana) was considered Vishnu's eighth incarnation, not Krishna Vasudeva. Munshi has recorded Vyasa constituting his 'pillar of fire' in his young days. Vyasa pervaded Munshi's vision more emphatically in his old age. In the *TAP*, Rajba, Munshi's chief female character, repeatedly sees visions of Veda Vyasa. Similarly, an entire volume, devoted to Veda Vyasa in the *KA* wherein Krishna is not even mentioned once, is only nominally a part of the *KA* and is not harmonized with the rest of the novel in spirit or tone. To justify the inclusion of this volume, Munshi focuses on his favourite theme of consolidation of diverse cultures and teachings of Aryavarta through Veda Vyasa, the ideal that Krishna tried to achieve in a different mode.

Krishna's portrayal as a child in his encounters with Yashoda, as a lover of Radha, and as a statesman is artistically well handled, but the parts do not blend to harmonize his character. Munshi's problem perhaps lay in the antithesis inherent in Krishna's character. The portrayal of God in a work of art is considered a difficult task. Milton faced the same problem and failed to achieve conviction for his God in *Paradise Lost*. Munshi's problem was more complex because his God was antithesis personified.[48] In the *KA*, Munshi's primary concern seems to objectify his ideal of a hero, of the culmination of a super man, the desire Munshi nurtured since 1946.[49] This last novel of Munshi, left incomplete because of his death, sym-

[47] Krishna's advocacy of the worship of Govardhan in lieu of offering sacrifice to Indra represents this trait. Munshi elaborates it in the *KA* 1.

[48] Various studies on Krishna have emphasized the multiplicity of his origin and the blending of various traditions in his worship. Democratization of his worship entailed a further development of irreconcilable traits.

[49] In a letter to Dilip Kumar Roy in 1946 Munshi said, "Because he (Krishna) is worshipped as a deity, the modern Westernistic mind hates even to look at the picture of perhaps the most triumphantly human of individuals which the imagination of twenty centuries has left to men. When I read the Mahabharata, the Bhagavata, the Harivamsha, and the Gita, one after the other—not as a devotee or a mystic but as a student of human nature—the 'Man' as he rose before me, was perfect and yet so real, I cried, "God made man—but man has made Krishna—what God would be if he were a man...I wish some great writer would complete the work of Bankim and give him back to the moderns as the 'Man' than whom the conception of perfection can go no higher." *Munshi* (1947), pp. 45-46.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

bolizes his devotion and admiration for Krishna. In *KA*, Munshi the man triumphs over the artist. Though Munshi, the story teller and the dramatist, excels in individual episodes and characterization, the work lacks consistency and Munshi's dramatic technique is inferior to that in his earlier novels. As a work of art, the *KA* does not show Munshi at his best.

Munshi's most mature art and vision are evident in the *JS*. There are several men of heroic stature in the *JS*, but the novel is primarily about the national greatness of people in arms. Munshi is not a partisan, he depicts the valor of Mahmud and his army and also exposes the foolishness of the Rajputs. The descriptive art reveals his maturity as he casts off fanciful descriptions for the realistic. The story focuses on Chaula, the temple dancer who, after a gruelling inner conflict, rejects her lover Bhimadeva and accepts Lord Shiva as her ultimate savior. She dies in the temple as she performs her last dance. Munshi antithetizes his dislike for *bhakti* literature by glorifying Chaula's devotional surrender.[50] Though this is not Munshi's popular novel, by his multifaceted vision, grandeur, and the maturity of his art, it represents the culmination of Munshi's harmonized vision and technique.

Munshi mentions in his preface to the *JS* that the impact of Dumas' style had vanished and that the *JS* may not be found as artistic as his famous trilogy.[51] That he is apologetic about his style in this novel, artistically his most mature work, confirms that Munshi lacked critical awareness of the art form. In this novel Munshi seems to have *intuitively* controlled the dramatic elements in a fine balance, but has not been aware of its artistic superiority.

Munshi's critical awareness being limited did not refine his creative art that intuitively aimed at self-expression. This was spontaneously governed by his love-power ridden ego, constituting the core of his literary writings. However, what was true of his novels and plays was also valid for his more objective work: his historical, thoughtful, political, and literary essays. Although Munshi contended that his works had a personal nucleus, referring to his literary creations, the remark

[50] The roots of this devotion can be found in his training in early childhood, when he cultivated a deep sense of devotion for Chandrashekhar, Shiva, the family deity. *AR*, p. 18.

[51] 'Preface' to *JS*, p. 9.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

held true for his non-literary discourses as well. In all these writings Munshi remains essentially a subjective interpreter. His historical writings on Gujarat and Gujarati literature,[52] though based on research, reveal a personal bias—Munshi's love for Gujarat. Like many nationalists, Munshi also delved deep into epigraphical and archaeological records with a scholar's tenacity,[53] ultimately only revealing the nationalist's pride.

That Munshi's critical awareness was limited is further evidenced by several of his critical observations, his restricted critical vocabulary, and the imposition of a subjective point of view. For example, Dumas' art as a story teller was rated second to none by Munshi.[54] Evidently, Munshi's enthusiasm rooted in his fascination for Dumas' writings blinded him to Dumas' mediocrity as a novelist in comparison to other master novelists. Munshi's critical vocabulary repeatedly exploited rather blunted terms like *sachot* 'effective,' *saras* 'interesting' and *apurva* 'unprecedented.'[55]

It is remarkable how Munshi's creative genius and critical comments oscillated between the opposites. Munshi was critical of the medieval devotional *bhakti* literature, which was renunciatory in tone, eliciting from him an epithet 'gospel of living death.'[56] So strong was his dislike for *bhakti-rasa*—the devotional sentiment, that Munshi has been labelled a reflector of its antithesis *samsari-rasa*—the worldly sentiment. However, the same Munshi wrote a romantic biography of a medieval bhakta poet Narsi Mehta,[57] a devotee of Krishna, in the style of Andre Maurois' *Ariel* (Shelley's biography). Since both Narsi and Krishna embodied *love*, they triggered Munshi's imagination despite his dislike for devotional literature. A biography in Munshi's hands became a romantic account of the

[52] See bibliography of Munshi's works—Appendix A.

[53] Ram Mohan Roy, Tilak, Ranade had already reinterpreted religious traditions contained in the *Vedas*, the *Shrutis*, the *Gita* with an objective of inspiring national pride.

[54] *AR*, p. 133.

[55] Munshi, *Thodank Rasadarshano*, pp. 8-15.

[56] *Ketlak Lekho* quoted by Nayak and Patel, p. 261.

[57] Narsi Mehta modelled some of his poems on Jayadeva's *Gita Govinda*, but is known to posterity more for his philosophical and mystical than erotic poems. His poems are sung even today in Gujarat. Narsi defined his ideal of a true Hindu Vaishnava in his song "*Vaishanava Jana*" which enjoys a high position in Gujarati literature and popularity in Gujarati families. This song was sung in prayer meetings of Mahatma Gandhi, becoming a great inspiring force to the people of India during the movement of independence. Many schools have adopted this song for their daily prayer.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

subject's life, highlighting those elements that appealed to Munshi the most. Since he deviated from the dry facts even in biography, as he did in his historical novels and plays, it reads more like a novel. But the same romanticized account can in spirit be contrasted to the factual critical discussion on Narsi's date in the same book. Munshi also wrote a biography of Narmad (1833-1886), the first among modern Gujarati writers and reformists, who symbolized *power* for Munshi. Narmad's watch words, *love* and *heroism,* found a suitable response in Munshi's *love-power* complex.

Compared with these romanticized biographies, *Gujarat na Jyotirdharo* and *Chakravarti Gurjaro,* collections of historical biographies, are more history oriented. What is remarkable is Munshi's urge to repeatedly portray the characters from Gujarat's golden age, the urge he had already very successfully satisfied through his historical novels that established him in the front rank of literary artists. His historical biographies are neither first class history nor great works of art. But the patriotic zeal of the man urged Munshi to pen them in the service of fellow-men and to accomplish a self-release.

In the process of syncretization of the opposing elements Munshi's art showed some deficiencies. It has been emphasized that his historical novels lack historical truth of events and psychological relatedness of characters to their age. Pramod Patel criticizes Munshi for not letting the characters belong to their times; they belong to Munshi's time.[58] It is already established in the preceding pages that Munshi was an artist, not a historian, in his historical novels. He used the 'myth' of the past as a commentary on the present and as a reflection of his vision of the future. According to some later critics, Munshi's non-traditionalism is considered superficial, too much of sound and fury signifying nothing.

Suresh Joshi contends that Munshi's characters often reveal the immaturity of his art. He says, "There is no conflict of comparable elements and their fierce confrontation is almost totally absent. He does not create a Hedda Gabler. His overly praised clarity of characters is only that of a diagram."[59] Joshi further wonders why Munshi modelled his works on

[58] Pramod Patel on Munshi's concept of history and historical novel, in *Granth,* 1971, pp. 110-116.
[59] Suresh Joshi quoted by Nayak and Patel, p. 60.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Dumas and not on Flaubert or Stendhal. The story teller Munshi is merely an entertainer, as contended by his modern critics. Prasanneya considers Munshi's most popular work, the *GN*, deficient in plot structure wherein "characters and events are not controlled by any centralized force."[60] Dinesh Kothari and K. Thaker also believe that Munshi lacked the single complex of life and individuality of character that are essential elements for the dramatic novel.[61]

This new trend in criticism reflects a change in literary taste and criteria. Munshi's creative period extended over sixty years during which literary norms had drastically changed. Just as in 1913 Munshi had rebelled against prior traditional literary norms, in the sixties he had become a tradition when younger critics found Munshi's work deficient in many aspects. This pattern is common to all literatures. Henry James found George Eliot wanting in "the game of art" and considered the novels of Dostoevsky and Tolstoi as "fluid puddings" since they lacked artistic economy. Elizabeth Drew attributes the change in taste to the rift between "intellectuals" and "best sellers."[62]

Munshi gave form and language suitable to his purpose of creating the ideal men and women India needed. His earlier literary works remained objective as he syncretized history and love, the temporal and the universal, to portray his power-thirsty heroic characters. Scholars have named the predominance of history and love as *Itihasa-rasa* (Sentiment of History) and *Samsari-rasa* (Worldly Sentiment.)[63] It is true that the artist at eighty-four was not the same as at twenty-five. Munshi recognized the difference in his writings as early as 1940 in the *JS*. The new critical taste in Gujarati literature especially after 1940's cultivated by the readings of Henry James, Virginia Woolf, and James Joyce, was based on a 'formal' concept of art, and found Munshi's works deficient.

Munshi's severest critics, however, admit that by precision of details and creation of beauty, by novel ideology and unconventionality, by vivid depiction of the human mind and its

[60] Nayak and Patel, p. 62. In *Granth* (1971), Prasanneya voices similar views in "Munshi na Patro" (Munshi's Characters), pp. 96-100.

[61] Dinesh Kothari and Thaker in "Inner life" quoted by Nayak and Patel p. 62.

[62] Elizabeth Drew, *The Novel* (New York : Dell, 1968), pp. 21-22.

[63] Nayak and Patel, p. 248.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

workings, and by the narrative-dramatic art to hold the reader's attention, Munshi attained popularity. Alfred Harbage aptly says: "Critics have been notoriously deficient prophets of immortality. Normally the work which has the best chance of survival is the one which appeals, if not to most people, at least to the most kinds of people in its own age. If it pleases all in one age, it will please some in all ages."[64] Munshi's social novels and plays are dated in substance and humor and may have limited appeal. But his historical and mythological novels and plays continue to have a wide audience. They please some in all ages.

[64] Alfred Harbage, *Shakespeare's Audience* (New York : Columbia University Press, 1961, copyright, 1941), p. 162.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

CHAPTER IV

Munshi's Plays and His Contribution to Gujarati Drama

MUNSHI'S plays offer a precise measure and understanding of his art. The significance of dramatic element in his technique has been elaborated before. It is critically examined in this chapter in relation to all of Munshi's plays. Although Munshi did not publish any drama until 1921, when he was already a novelist of repute, the nucleus of his literary art was dramatic. The significance of Munshi's contribution to Gujarati drama can be fully appreciated if the prevalent state of the drama before him is surveyed.

K. M. Jhaveri's *Further Milestones in Gujarati Literature*, published in 1924, provides an in-depth survey of the development of Gujarati drama, its activities, achievements, and deficiencies about the time Munshi started writing plays in 1921.[1] The period between the decline of Sanskrit drama and the rise

[1] Jhaveri does not include Munshi as a dramatist, because Munshi was still to write most of his plays, pp. 197-247. But he mentions Munshi's merits as a novelist, "Recently a novelist worthy of the first rank among writers of that class suddenly blossomed out." p. 288.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

of the modern, from the eleventh to the nineteenth century,[2] was marked by the prevalence of popular forms of entertainment called the *Bhavai,* the *Ramalila* or the *Rasalila* in Gujarat. Like the medieval mystery plays and the miracle plays in Western Europe, these folk plays were related to well-known religious stories. The *Ramayana,* the *Mahabharata,* and the *Purana* were the prime sources for the subject matter of these performances. Faubion Bowers attributes the absence of dramatic literature in the medieval period to the Muslim rule in India.[3] Basham maintains that after the Muslim invasion the Sanskrit theatrical tradition 'became a thing of the past.'[4]

In various parts of the country religious story tellers, singing groups and performers abounded, partly as an expression of religious need under an alien religious rule,[5] and partly to satisfy the need for entertainment. Of all the arts, theater and histrionic arts found little favor with the Muslim rulers, probably because of religious strictures against iconic arts in the Koran.[6] In Bengal arose groups of *Yatra-Kirtana* or *Palgana,* in Bihar the *Videshia,* in North India the *Rasa, Nautaki,* and *Swang* or *Bhanda,* in Rajasthan the *Rasa* or *Zumer,* in Maharashtra the *Lalita* and the *Tamasha,* in Andhra the *Bhagavata Mela* and in Gujarat the *Bhavai* and the *Ramalila.*[7] All these essentially have the same source of inspiration despite their structural differences. Their names indicate a confluence of dancing, singing, and religious elements.

Since these forms of popular 'drama' primarily entertained the illiterate and unsophisticated masses, infiltration of social scenes from contemporary life into religious presentation became a natural phenomenon of the *Bhavai* in Gujarat. Both

[2] Basham mentions Rajashekhara (9th and 10th c.) and Krishnamishra (11th c.) as the last known Sanskrit playwrights. "We have records of the occasional production of Sanskrit plays until the Muslim invasion, after which the Sanskrit theatrical tradition, though not forgotten, became a thing of the past." *The Wonder That was India* (New York: Grove Press, 1954, 1959), p. 442.

[3] Faubion Bowers, *Theater in India,* pp. 6-7. Quoted by Mahesh Choksi, *Gujarati Natya Sahitya no Udbhava ane Vikas* 'The Origin and Development of Gujarati Dramatic Literature' (Ahmedabad: Gujarat Sangit, Nritya, Natya Academy, 1965), p. 33.

[4] Basham, p. 442.

[5] Religious persecution during the Muslim rule is considered to have given an impetus to the *bhakti* movement in India.

[6] Faubion Bowers, quoted by Mahesh Choksi, p. 33.

[7] Choksi, p. 33.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

the *Bhavai* and *Ramalila* had a profusion of songs and dances, and were associated with seasonal and religious festivals. Popular devotional cults, of the worship of Shakti, Shiva, and Krishna, amalgamated, creating a tradition of folk literature comprising social, cultural, and religious traits of the time.

The *Bhavai* acquired a high mark of histrionic talent. Certain families, like the Targalas ('of the three houses'), had monopolized the chief role, of the *Nayaka,* in these performances.[8] Umashankar Joshi derives the etymology of the word Anarta (Gujarat) from the root word *nrita* 'dance' and describes Gujarat as a 'land of singers and dancers.'[9] Jhaveri considers the *Bhavai* as indigenous to Gujarat and probably older than the *Ramalila.* He summarizes its inherent features: "It is an amalgam of drama, farce, skit, satire and every possible presentation of human action and emotion. It is played by a special caste or community of actors called *Bhavaiyas* or *Targalas.* Its distinguishing features are gross vulgarity, open indecency, public obscenity, now and then tempered by certain home-truths."[10] The *Bhavai* combined dramatic elements of satire and comedy with religious purport, but its licentiousness turned the attention of sophisticated writers in the early nineteenth century to adaptations of Sanskrit and European plays. The history of Gujarati drama during this period records several translations from Bengali, Marathi, Hindi, and Tamil plays, besides Sanskrit and English.[11]

It is interesting to note that the first modern Gujarati drama *Lakshmi* (1851) by Dalpatram, was an adaptation of Aristophanes' play *Plutus,* and combined elements of the *Bhavai* and the old Greek comedy. Ranchhodbhai Udayram Dave (1830-1923) relieved the drama from the tradition of the *Bhavai,* and gave it a well defined and artistic form. Before him several popular plays were written but Dave combined literary and stageable elements, which earned him the title of the father of Gujarati drama.[12] Social and mythological

[8] K. M. Jhaveri, p. 198, and Choksi, p. 38.

[9] Referred to by Choksi, p. 40. Scholars have given different derivations of the word *bhavai*, associating them with acting, *bhava*, the worship of *Shakti*, *bhagavatiyajna*; and prayers with music, *bhajan*, Choksi, p. 35.

[10] K. M. Jhaveri, pp. 198-199.

[11] Ibid., pp. 218-224. Literature all over India was modernized under the impact of English education in the early nineteenth century.

[12] Choksi, p. 96.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

themes comprised the subject matter of his plays, that combined the techniques of Sanskrit and Shakespearean plays. His best play, *Lalita Dukhadarshaka* ('Revelation of Lalita's Miseries,' 1866), dealing with the miseries ensuing from an incompatible marriage, became a model for a subsequent generation of writers who handled themes of this nature for reformist purposes.[13] The literary value of these plays is dubious, but they reflect an important tradition that remained alive in Munshi's plays in different form and spirit.

Before Munshi a tradition of historical plays had also arisen in Gujarati drama. Navalram's *Virmati* (1869) had rescued Gujarati drama from "the stigma of possessing no historical dramatic conscience."[14] Choksi lists several writers primarily concerned with stageable plays more than literary creations, who wrote innumerable historical and mythological plays.[15] Insistence on theatricality in these plays made the Gujarati stage more "a stage for the actors than for the drama."[16]

An important contribution in the genre of literary drama was made by Ramanbhai Nilkanth's *Rai no Parvat* (1913) which syncretized Sanskrit and Western conventions of dramatic theory. The play is a complex manifestation of a poet-thinker, dramatist-reformist, and humorist-prose stylist. But Rai remains a vehicle to express the author's views on religion and society. Likewise Kant (1869-1923), an elder contemporary of Munshi, used his historical plays *Be Natako* to voice his personal sentiments. Despite powerful characterization, Kant's plays remained mere chronicles and the author's mouthpieces. Munshi also used plays for the projection of his ideology, but without making them propagandist; his characters remained individualistic.

An important tradition of idealistic plays had emerged in Nanalal's *Indukumar* (1909) and *Jaya-Jayant* (1914), portraying a platonic ideology of love and unity of souls for the creation of a spiritual universe. Munshi counteracted this imaginary, airy world by his passionate 'joy of life' and earthly love

[13] Choksi lists twenty such plays written between 1868-1890, pp. 108-109.

[14] K. M. Jhaveri, p. 211.

[15] Choksi, pp. 54-59.

[16] Jayanti Dalal in a talk given at the time of the centenary celebrations of Gujarati theater in 1951. Noted by Choksi, p. 54.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

to attain the 'unity of souls.' Many plays of Munshi's predecessors were of great literary value, but were too fragile for the stage. Sanskritized diction in the plays of Nilkanth and Nanalal and their high-flown ideals removed them from everyday experiences of life, and failed to synthesize art and theater.

On the other scale was the theater—the 'Professional Stage' consisting of travelling theater troupes—that failed to achieve any literary excellence. The professional stage abounded in sub-plots, farcical interludes, sentimental lyrics, artificial clamor and rhetoric.[17] Female roles were played by men, some of whom became well-known character actors. But the high mark of achievement in acting was not matched by artistic integration of the drama. The sophisticated literary public had turned away from the theater.[18] Munshi's fondness for such performances in his childhood and youth reflected his intuitive response to drama. In his maturer years, he was critical of the artificiality of these performances (*SC* I, p. 69). Munshi's fascination for and critical evaluation of the drama of his time helped him bridge the gap between literature and the theater.

Munshi and C. C. Mehta are considered pioneers in effecting a marriage between the literary and the theatrical elements.[19] Although scholars have bracketed Munshi and Mehta as the chief forces in revolutionizing Gujarati drama, chronologically Munshi precedes Mehta, whose first play was not published till 1934, when Munshi had published all but three of his fifteen plays. Admittedly, Mehta's contribution to and impact on Gujarati drama was more profound and lasting than Munshi's, but the title of the 'Modern Pioneer' must be given to Munshi.[20]

In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, Ibsen's plays had revolutionized European drama; in the early twentieth century Ibsen's influence was felt by writers in Gujarat; Munshi was one of them. Under Ibsen's impact, insistence on realistic presentation of romantic ideals, an attempt to probe into the intricacies of human nature, conflict between individual and social forces and the use of everyday language emerged as

[17] Nayak and Patel, p. 18.
[18] Ibid., p. 19.
[19] Ibid., p. 127. Choksi, Chapters 12 and 13.
[20] Choksi labels Munshi thus. p. 190.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

the outstanding qualities of Munshi's plays. A younger contemporary of Munshi, Batubhai Umarwadia (1899-1959) reflected these elements in his one-act plays.[21]

Munshi's plays can be divided into three broad categories: mythological, historical and social. The inherent paradox of Munshi's serio-comic insight is distinguishable in two different genres. His mythological plays do not deviate into comedy, and his social plays are invariably comic, satirical or farcical. Munshi's only historical play, *Dhruvasvaminidevi,* mingles the serious and the comic in a finely-sustained balance, and becomes his unique play for more than one reason. Munshi's social comedies, though artistically often inferior, were very popular; they started a new tradition that was vigorously followed by next generation of writers.[22]

Munshi's originality consisted in his imbibing more recent Western elements of literature and projecting them in a mode totally different from his predecessors'. Diction and style in the drama before Munshi reflected a mixture of prose and poetry, following the traditions of Sanskrit and Shakespearean plays. Being inspired by Ibsen and Shaw, Munshi wrote his plays in prose, eliminating verse completely, or using it only for special effect.[23] Absence of songs from the drama was a radical move for Munshi, in view of their pervasiveness in literary and theatrical plays. Munshi also discarded the traditional division of acts into scenes.[24] To introduce characters and describe the setting, he adopted Ibsenite and Shavian stage directions, used with extreme economy. This is substantiated in the *DSD.* Munshi's mythological plays retained the use of soliloquy that was often criticized by modern scholars.[25] However, in his best plays Munshi abandoned soliloquies; his representative play *DSD* exemplifies this well. Although Munshi did not create a new genre, he revolutionized the traditional forms. Navalram Trivedi says, "Discarding certain

[21] Umarwadia's one-act problem plays made an important contribution to Gujarati drama. Choski, p. 277.

[22] Dinmanishankar Desai, "Munshi nan Samajik Natako" (Social Plays of Munshi) in *Granth* (1971), pp. 119-126.

[23] See the discussion of Act IV of the *DSD* for the use of verse. In *Chhie Tej Thik,* (Best as We Are), a comedy, Munshi uses verse for the mock-heroic effect to parody a serious issue.

[24] *Lopamudra* is the only exception to this usage.

[25] Jashvant Shekhadiwala, "Munshi nan Pauranik Natako" (Mythological Plays of Munshi) in *Granth,* pp. 72-95.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

prevalent literary conventions, Munshi renovated the genre of Gujarati drama."[26]

Of Munshi's fifteen plays, eight were social, five mythological,[27] one historical, and one fantasy. In fifteen years, 1921-1936, Munshi wrote thirteen plays, and a play each in 1946[28] and 1953. They are arranged in chronological order in each category as follows:

Mythological Plays:

1. *Purandar Parajaya,* 'Defeat of Indra' (*PPJ*), 1922.
2. *Avibhakta Atma,* 'The Undivided Soul' (*AA*), 1923.
3. *Tarpan,* 'Obsequial Offering' (*TAR*), 1924.
4. *Putra Samovadi,* 'Like unto a Son' (*PS*), 1929.
5. *Lopamudra,* (*LOP*), parts II, III, 1933; IV, 1934.

Social Plays:

1. *Vava Sheth nun Swatantrya,* 'Freedom of Vava Sheth' (*VVS*) 1921.
2. *Be Kharab Jan,* 'Two Bad Guys' (*BKJ*), 1924.
3. *Ajnankita,* 'The Obedient' (*AJN*), 1927.
4. *Kaka ni Shashi,* 'Uncle's Shashi' (*KS*), 1929.
5. *Pidagrasta Professor* 'The Afflicted Professor' (*PID*), written 1931, published 1933.
6. *Brahmacharyashrama* 'The Stage of Abstinence' (*BRH*), written 1931, published 1933.
7. *Dr. Madhurika* (*DR*), 1936.
8. *Chhie Tej Thik* 'Best as We Are' (*CTT*), 1946 (?)

Historical Play:

1. *Dhruvasvaminidevi* (*DSD*), 1929.

Fantasy:

1. *Vah re Men Vah* 'Kudos to Me' (*VAH*), 1953.

Munshi deviated from the tradition of mythological drama

[26] In Nayak and Patel, p. 129.

[27] Three parts of *Lopamudra* were published under different titles: "Shambar Kanya" (Daughter of Shambar), "Deve Didheli" (Given by God), "Vishvamitra Rishi" (The Sage Vishvamitra).

[28] The dates are taken as indicated in *Munshi* vol III (1957), which does not include *Chhie Tej Thik.* Choksi dates it 1946; since the source of this date is unknown, the date is only tentative.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

that derived its material from the epics and the *Puranas*. His plays in this category are described in *Munshi: His Art and Work*, vol. III, as "An Epic of Early Aryans,"[29] since all of his plays depict Aryan and non-Aryan conflict of Vedic times, enunciating his theme of Aryan culture. He related the ancient stories to his contemporary values and issues. Munshi decided to write an 'epic-play' divided into twelve plays, probably following the Western literary tradition of division of an epic-poem into twelve books.[30]

The serious treatment of antiquity recapturing the spirit of Aryan heroism is antithetized by a comical exposition of the foibles and hypocrisies of modern society. Thoroughly unconventional in outlook, modern in spirit, and humorous in exposition, Munshi's social plays are the exact opposite of his mythological plays. Munshi declared that some of his comedies were not fit to be read by 'those who are repositories of prestige and solemnity.'[31] Munshi, as it were, sought 'comic relief' from his messianic zeal amply manifested in his serious works. Compared with his social plays, his social novels were serious in intent and mode of execution as elaborated before. It is therefore not valid to state, as many critics have, that the past alone opened possibilities of serious speculation for Munshi. It is, however, true that recreation of the past to revitalize the present constituted a major part of Munshi's literary activity.

However antithetical be the exposition in these two categories, they are similar in intent—reinforcing a serious objective. The comedies are geared toward establishing a sane point of view, the golden mean avoiding the extremes. In each social play, after comic frivolity and exaggerated exhibition of idiosyncracies, a healthy attitude is established. It is interesting to note Munshi's own evaluation of his comic vision; he says, "...I have not succeeded with humor, as with satire, mockery and malicious fun, if by humor is meant, as Carlyle said, sympathy with the seamy side of things." Munshi's sweep of common sense is intolerant, even malicious. It is described by V. S. Bhushan as similar to Meredith's concept of the comic spirit, 'the sweep of Hawk over Heron.'[32]

[29] *Munshi* Vol. III (1957), Chapters 9, 10, 11.
[30] See fn 10, Chapter III.
[31] Munshi subtitles the *BKJ* with these words.
[32] *Munshi* Vol. III (1957), p. 19.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

In the reconciliation of moral good (*shreya*) and personal desire (*preya*) the three categories of Munshi's plays reveal an interesting pattern. In all his mythological plays, with the exception of the *AA*, moral good triumphs over personal desires. Conversely, the social plays enforce the victory of genuine human passions over hypocritical social norms, facade of idealism, or restrictive social conventions. Interestingly, Munshi's historical play, the *DSD*, strikes a synthesis of the two. The moral good and the personal passion coincide in the furtherence of a heroic ideal. Although a similar coincidence is aimed at in the *AA*, it is deficient as a drama, and therefore, the *DSD* is the only play that represents Munshi's theme and art at their best.

All of Munshi's plays were staged, though his social plays were more popular because of their familiarity, unconventionality and greater stageability. Munshi's attempt at a scenario in *Kula Vadhu* (Hindi, 1936) reflected more of his zeal for the language than an academic or artistic accomplishment. That his bold venture in a new language be projected in dramatic genre also reinstates Munshi's intuitive fascination and effortless expression in this form. This probably also echoed the impact of the Hindi movies that were then becoming popular, which, for Munshi, the experimentalist, was too great to resist. *Kula Vadhu* was his only effort of the kind.

Munshi's contribution to Gujarati theater was not restricted to the stageability of his plays. His exuberance, radicalism and experimentalism manifested in various areas of the theater world. First, on the professional stage, some female roles were still being played by men, and only women of 'not so respectable a background' participated in stage performances. Munshi was a pioneer in bringing women of 'respectable families' on the stage to act in plays and perform classical folk dances. Such bold ventures were resisted by the orthodox sections of society, and they once created a near-riot situation in Bombay.[33] In 1929 Munshi made another move. He directed his play *KS* which was enthusiastically received. Third, in 1935 he evolved a new dramatic medium of dance-drama, and directed it. *Narsaiyo* became the first creation in this genre[34] in Gujarati. This was followed by a more elaborate

[33] Natraj Vashi, quoted in *Munshi* (1947), p. 486.

[34] *Munshi* (1947), p. xx. This form had already developed in Bengal, e.g. Tagore's *Chandalika*.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

production of *Jay Somnath,* a dance-drama based on Munshi's novel of the same title. Although these were solitary efforts in the genre of dance-drama, like his Hindi scenario, they highlight Munshi's bold experimentalism.

Munshi's concretized contribution to Gujarati drama is represented by the Art Center, *Kala Kendra,* a branch of the Bhavan dedicated to drama, dance and music. Today, the Bhavan's theater is one of the major venues of dramatic art in Bombay. "To have pulled out theatrical acting and production from the mire of social abuse and disgrace, and put them on a high social pedestal was a singular work on the part of Munshi."[35]

Mythological Plays:

Munshi's mythological plays focus on the theme of revitalization of Aryan culture for social regeneration, as elaborated in previous chapters. Munshi adopted a common approach to history and mythology in his creative art. Therefore, comments on the treatment of history in his imaginative writings are applicable to his mythological ones as well.

Non-availability of authentic material concerning the milieu of past ages facilitated Munshi's creative expression, since he could let his imagination have full play. Dryden said, "Where the event of a great action is left doubtful, there the poet is left master" in his preface to *Don Sabastian,* the historical background of which was sufficiently thin to leave his imagination ample room for creativity.[36] Since Munshi's intent in these plays was not to recreate a replica of antiquity, his romantic genius rallied in the paucity of authentic material concerning Vedic times or the shadowy history of Ramagupta in the *DSD.* Munshi's blending of modern spirit into antique background has brought against him charges of anachronism.[37] Since these charges are based on historical speculation, equally uncertain, an element of probability exists in the contentions of the critic and the writer alike.

Moreover, Munshi had the support of an established theory that poetry and history were distinct fields having their own

[35] *Munshi* (1947), p. 489.
[36] Herbert Lindenberger, *Historical Drama* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 2.
[37] Shekhdiwala in *Granth,* p. 88.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

rules and conventions.[38] The writer of a historical drama seeks relevance in the continuity of the past, present and future; and interprets history as he sees it. Accordingly, Herbert Lindenberger mentions dramatists of varied geniuses, such as Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Goethe, and Brecht, and concludes that the continuity between the past and the present is the central assertion 'in history plays of all times and styles.'[39] Lindenberger also mentions the national objective, exhorting people to patriotism in the historical plays of Kleist, Ibsen and Strindberg, as having only a local appeal.[40]

Munshi's mythological plays were motivated by his sense of the historical continuity of Indian culture and an urge to exhort his people to national pride and uphold the ancient ideals. Against the background of antiquity, Munshi created a medley of fundamental human passions and contemporary social and political themes. Such preoccupation of the writer and comparatively 'thin' historical material in his works have elicited a critical opinion that Munshi's plays were only nominally historical; and he could have as well cast his material against a contemporary background.[41] This could not be so. Munshi's vision needed the tether of history to project serious treatment of his subject. The contemporary scene hardly triggered Munshi's literary instinct for recreation of the heroic ideals. History played a significant role in Munshi's art and vision. He won conviction for his romantic ideals of love and intrigue by the implied factuality of the historical framework, and his national objective, elaborated before, can hardly be ignored.

Scholars in the West have established a relationship between invocation of history and the theater. Stanley Cavell emphasizes their association in "all but inescapable temptation to think of the past in terms of theater."[42] Munshi's genius, operating vigorously in areas of nationalism, history, and theater found fullest expression in this genre. Lindenberger's contention holds true for Munshi when he says, "When history invokes theater... it (history) can console itself, elevate itself, assert its essential dignity in the face of those who would sug-

[38] Lindenberger, p. 3. [39] Ibid., p. 5. [40] Ibid., pp. 5-6.

[41] D. Jadeja suggests a hypothetical argument in *Granth* p. 108.

[42] Stanley Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?* (New York: Scribner's 1969), p. 337.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

gest its meaninglessness."[43] Munshi gave meaning to the dead pages, establishing history in its modern context in his drama. An examination of his objective and its execution in individual plays will enlarge preceding observations.

Ideologies conceptualized in Munshi's mythological plays have dual dimensions, personal and communal. *PPJ* glorifies the ideal of an Aryan woman of antiquity and dramatizes her conflicts. The marriage of King Shrayati's daughter, Sukanya, with an old disabled *rishi* Chyavana generates conflict in her mind. Dissatisfied with her lot, she invokes the eternally young Ashvins to be her lovers, who advise her to think well before taking such an extreme step. An encounter between Sukanya and a morally-disgraced woman seeking Sukanya's help to shield herself from the inflictors of punishment, makes Sukanya realize her mistake. She requests the Ashvins to go back. Chyavana regains his youth with the blessings of the Ashvins, who were also mythological physicians and ultimately defeats Indra (Purandar) whose curse had originally brought misery on him.

Munshi's Sukanya invokes the Ashvins, whereas in the original source, the *Chyavanopakhyana* in the *Mahabharata* and the *Shatapatha Brahmana,* the Ashvins tempt Sukanya but she rejects them. The change reflects Munshi's projection of his time, of the modern woman's assertion, her endeavor to cast away the hollow shells of ethics and morality. The portrayal of conflict between moral good and personal desire culminates in the vision of the self-realized truth and victory over self. This is the central theme of the play. Munshi maintains that a woman's honor is dependent on her own decisions, not on an arbitrary norm. Such personal efforts constitute the foundation of stability in married life and Aryan culture. That Chyavana is a Bhargava and is finally victorious, may be attributed to Munshi's family pride that repeatedly sought self-gratifying episodes from antiquity.

In his social plays, Munshi often uses the theme of incompatible marriage but resolves the conflict differently, by letting personal desires triumph over social norms. However, the confronting moral standard is not of the same nature in both these categories. In the social plays it is a blind following of

[43] Lindenberger, p. 29.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

a stifling convention, in the mythological plays it is born of a deeper moral issue of love, faith or duty. Sukanya sacrifices her personal desire in favour of the ideal of unity, "...This body is not mine; I have no right to fulfill my passions at will. Chyavana and I are one and indivisible. We became one in the presence of *Agni*. I acquired a position of a *rishi* and also accepted his old age. How can I now separate?" (*PPJ*, p. 36). Sukanya's decision is born of her conviction, not of blind acceptance of a convention. But her words are obviously anti-feminist and, therefore, to a more recent critic Munshi appears a radical who was in fact, merely a preserver of tradition. In Sukanya's character, Munshi perpetrates the ideal of *sati*, of true love that transcends physical inadequacies, as a noble characteristic that should be preserved. The play reinforces a modern woman's privilege to make her own decisions as well.

Munshi's next play *Avibhakta Atma* 'The Undivided Soul' (*AA*) depicts his central ideology. It is a love story of two sages, Vasishtha and Arundhati, who attain non-duality of souls through marriage. They also constitute the seventh star of the *Saptarshi* constellation, and symbolize the ideal of conjugal love, the belief Munshi drew from the Hindu tradition.[44] The play conceptualizes a belief that true lovers represent two halves of the same soul; till the two unite, life remains incomplete.

The background of the story relates to the incident of displaced Aryans, who had come to the land they called Aryavarta, under the leadership of Manu from their arctic home. After ninety-seven years they are still unsettled. They attribute their agonizing wanderings to their loss of the *Saptarshi* constellation that always protected them in their original home, an astronomical reality. Vasishtha is the befitting seventh *rishi* for the completion of a new constellation that, god Varuna had promised, would put an end to their wanderings and bring peace. Arundhati is also ambitious to occupy that position, since Munshi's men and women vie with each other for equality. It is suggested that Munshi dramatized the fact that, of the wives of all the seven *rishis*, only Arundhati eventually found a position in the constellation.[45] The competition for the position of prestige may reflect an infusion of modern attitude into

[44] After the wedding ceremony, the couple looks at the constellation, according to the Hindu tradition, for a long-lasting relationship.

[45] D. Shastri, in a note to the play, discusses the sources.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

antiquity. But in the Vedic times, it is held, women were not discriminated against,[46] a theory that was popular among reformist nationalists. Munshi utilizes this information to create a parallel that would appeal to the imagination of his audience.

But the central conflict in the play does not focus on the competition for *rishi*-hood between Vasishtha and Arundhati; it centers on the differences in their ideologies. Arundhati advocates penance and self-discipline that exclude love and marriage. Vasishtha considers such ideology inconsistent with the cosmic order. He says, "If the ultimate fulfillment can be attained by remaining alone, why are two kinds created? Arundhati, men and women by themselves are incomplete—they float in the river of time searching for their other halves. Often their search is futile. Sometimes these halves, destined for each other, meet; the body is complete and the soul manifests as undivided, then alone the penance is complete." (*AA*, p. 61). For Munshi this was the basis in life and literature alike. In the *Bhagavad Gita and Modern Life*, Munshi propounded the same ideal in the sublimation of sex for the highest spiritual experience."[47] The *AA* was written soon after Munshi discovered his 'dream girl,' Lilavati. In the *SSS* he says, "During this period I had begun to write the play *Avibhakta Atma*. It is an effortless delineation of our feelings, our objectives, our small disputes, and the wrath of the world. Many times we used to address each other as 'Vasishtha' and 'Arundhati.' This play was written to give solace to ourselves and what we could not utter openly, we started expressing in our literary creations." (*SSS*, p. 65).[48]

[46] R. K. Mookerji maintains that women in Vedic times could perform sacrifices independently, could chant Vedic hymns, and become *rishikas* and *brahmavadinis*. Some of them wrote hymns that were included in Rig Veda. "Women in Ancient India" in *Women of India* (Delhi: 1958), p. 2, 161. Frazer R. W. pushes a theory that the Aryans lost many women on their journey into India, which gave them a privileged position, they being essential for the survival of the society. *Indian Thought Past and Present* (New York; Fisher Unwin, 1915), pp. 278-279.

[47] Munshi, *Bhagavad Gita and Modern Life*, pp. 149-188.

[48] In this connection, Munshi's dialogue with Lilavati in the initial stages of their relationship is significant.

Munshi: I have felt our undivided soul. I see life's fulfilment only in its realization, and I have resolved to attain it—even if I die in the process. But do you have faith in this 'soul'? Can you sustain it?

Lilavati: I do not have faith in that 'soul,' but I have enough faith in you and, therefore, in the soul too.

Munshi: But I am a conglomoration of idealism and practicalism. To realize that 'undivided soul' we have to perform a penance". *SSS*, pp. 45-46.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

The *AA* reflects still another contemporary issue of independent interpretation of the word of God and non-submission to conventions. The conflict between Kratu, one of the six older sages, and Vasishtha echoes the strife between the older generation's insistence on convention and the younger's right to reinterpret its significance. (*AA*, p. 55). Vasishtha embodies Munshi's love of freedom and some of his strifes with the orthodox in his community. Munshi's fundamental concept of love and power is capsulized in the *AA*. Realization of love demands penance that is rewarded by power which was epitomized in the undivided soul and a place in the constellation. But the preponderance of the personal element adversely affects artistic unity of the play; as a work of art the *AA* is weak. Munshi diffuses his energies in trying to develop several characters, though none is sharp enough. Vasishtha appears more a romantic, sensuous lover desirous of a fine family, than a *Brahmarshi*. Arundhati is a typical female upright idealist who ultimately succumbs to Vasishtha's approach (*AA*, p. 79). Kratu resembles a wrathful, jealous Brahmin more than a revered *rishi*. Shvetaketu is a fanatic, unsophisticated Brahmin, not much of a *muni* that he is supposed to be.

Concentration on one theme in the *PPJ* makes it more unified than the *AA*. At best the dialogues are powerful and deepen the conflicts, but they often indulge in dry verbosity. A three-page-long soliloquy of Vasishtha (pp. 73-75) and a slightly shorter one of Shvetaketu (pp. 80-81) weaken the texture of the play. This deficiency is evident in Munshi's earlier plays, and is absent in his more mature plays including the *DSD*. Although the *AA* is not divided into scenes, the plot structure covering three years in four acts is loose. On the whole, this is the weakest play of Munshi that most represents the man. In the conciliation of personal desire and moral good in glorification of love and marriage, the *AA* symbolizes Munshi's third wish-fulfilment. Munshi considered the *AA* very dear to his heart despite its dramatic weaknesses, a fact that once again supports my contention that the man ruled the critic and the artist. When the two spontaneously blended well, the artistic accomplishments were admirable as evident in Munshi's third mythological play *Tarpan*.

Tarpan, 'Obsequial Offering', (*TAR*) is devoid of these deficiencies. The story is centralized in the enmity between

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Vitahavya, the Haihaya chief, and Aurva, a Bhargava *rishi*. Suvarna, the daughter of Vitahavya, falls in love with Sagar, the disciple and foster son of Aurva. The Bhargava's vow of vengeance taken by his mother's deathbed, hence the title, to destroy the Haihaya persecutors of his ancestors puts a tragic end to the love between the children of the two warring groups. Before the final battle, Aurva crowns Sagar and makes him the king of Aryavarta; as *gurudakshina,* Aurva claims the heads of Vitahavya and Suvarna. Torn between love and duty, Sagar faces a tragic dilemma which is effectively dramatized by Munshi. Sagar ultimately fulfils his promise by bringing the head of Vithavya, the sight of which causes Suvarna's death.

Munshi develops the plot in his characteristic mode of a quick succession of events, keeping the two stories of Aurva's vengeance and the lovers' progress parallel. Their juxtaposition creates some fine situations importing dramatic irony, which Munshi delineates in balanced and crisp dialogues. This is well illustrated in the handling of the last meeting between the lovers before Sagar fulfils his inhuman vow. Suvarna, who is confident of Sagar's capacity to mediate between the two chiefs, considers this meeting a prelude to their marriage, which she expects would take place the 'day after tomorrow.' (*TAR*, p. 156). For her it is the night of bliss, for Sagar, the night of destruction. Suvarna's expectant joy expressed in her jovial remarks alternates with Sagar's ambivalent comments, signifying the forthcoming tragic end of their relationship (*TAR*), p. 157. Sagar's soliloquies, though extensive, well portray his dilemma. Love scenes vividly recreate the young lovers' joys, aspirations, doubts and frustrations. Munshi's art in recreating various sentiments (*rasas*), the heroic, the pathetic, and the erotic, is well exemplified in this play. It was also considered a success on the stage.[49]

However, Sagar does not attain tragic grandeur. He is not one of Munshi's heroic characters who fight for their love; he seems an ardent but weak lover, more a submissive subordinate than an able, statesmanly mediator. Munshi's real hero is a Bhargava, Aurva. He epitomizes the ideal of reaching the goal at any cost. His zeal makes him incorrigibly

[49] Nayak and Patel, p. 139.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

violent. Although Aurva's reliance on violence may be an authentic trait of a Vedic Brahmin, his perpetration of merciless massacre reflects the typical Munshi. Aurva's watchword is "The weak must perish" (*TAR*, p. 126). When Bharadwaj, one of his disciples, fails to carry out atrocious killings of women and cows of the Haihayas, ordered by Aurva, the latter kills him with a mere blow of the fist (*TAR*, p. 126). Sagar calls him *kraurya murti* 'rage incarnate,' who would adopt any means to attain his goal of annihilating the non-Aryan Haihayas and reestablishing the Aryan rule. Aurva's goal combines the personal with the communal good. Munshi has been criticized for indiscreet glorification of unethical Brahminism,[50] since, to his contemporaries, Aryan values coincided with non-violence under the influence of Gandhi.

It is obvious that Munshi's ideal of the heroic Aryan did not primarily consist of ethics and morality, but of militant power. His ideal was Parashurama. The source of such an ideal was Munshi himself. His close friend Chandrashankar described Munshi as early as 1921, thus: "Munshi means heroism, Munshi means militance, Munshi means *rajoguna*. To understand this is to understand Munshi. ...Whether you praise him or blame him, Munshi means assertion and egotism."[51] In the light of his personality Munshi envisioned the cosmic truth (*rita*) of Aryan culture. Judged by the commonly accepted ideal of his time Munshi revealed paradoxical traits; evaluated independently, Munshi embodied liberated spirit.

In 1929, Munshi published three plays, the *PS*, the *KS*, and the *DSD*, in three different categories,[52] dealing with the theme of women's equality with men, providing a triple variation of the same issue. The *PS*, unlike the *KS* and the *DSD*, depicts woman's independence in its ultimate form, unbending and inviolate till the end. All other phases of woman's nature, including love, are subordinated to Devyani's concentration on attaining her objective. She shares her father Shukracharya's

[50] Nayak and Patel, p. 187.

[51] S. Pandya, ed., *Chandrashankar na Gadya Ratno* 'Prose gems of Chandrashankar' (Bombay: Tripathi, 1966), p. 188. The advocacy of violence in the *TAR* anticipates Munshi's disagreement with Gandhi on the issue of non-violence in the fight for independence. See "Non-violence as I understand It" and "Gandhi-Munshi Correspondence" in *Akhand Hindustan*, pp. 218-224. 261-269.

[52] The *PS*, the *KS*, and the *DSD*,—mythological, social and historical plays respectively provide the variation.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

dream of an ideal democratic principle of freedom. They together want to conquer the gods, acquire the Indrasana, symbolic of dictatorial rule, and destroy it. Devastating passion for liberation from the gods and the establishment of equality among gods, *danavas,* and men constitute the subject matter of this play. Both the themes, women's independence and the democratic ideal of independence, echo contemporary social and political issues that brought charges of anachronism against Munshi.[53]

At the center of the *PS* is Shukracharya, Bhargava *guru* of the *danavas*. Munshi's natural admiration for a Bhargava results in the portrayal of gods as anti-heroes. Though Indra retains his radiance, even when defeated, the *danavas,* despite their weird ways, are sympathetically drawn. Indra and his retinue of gods represent oppressive government. The *danavas,* killed in their fight with the *devas,* are revived by the revivifying (*sanjivani*) *mantra* of Shukracharya. The *devas* conspire and send their *guru* Brihaspati's son, Kacha, as a disciple to Shukracharya to learn the *sanjivani mantra.* Shukracharya generously accepts the rival's son, though he is dubious about the wisdom of such an act. Sharing some of Munshi's love for risks, he probably considers this a challenge and accepts it. He warns his daughter, who soon falls in love with the young man, to be wary of an enemy's son. The same perceptive Shukracharya proves to be an indulgent father who, in complying with Devyani's desire, risks his life (*PS,* p. 195). He is impulsive and, when angry, he curses (*PS*, p. 201). It is Devyani who verbalizes his ideals since she is Munshi's protagonist.

Devyani epitomizes the ideal that in her own right she can attain the ultimate as a son (cf. the title). Her relentless pursuit of the ideal makes her stronger than any man in the play. Although prone to feminine feelings of love-lorn anxiety and jealousy as revealed in her affair with Kacha, and later, in her marriage with Yayati, the king of men, Devyani considers both men subservient to the pursuit of her goal. She lets go Kacha, despite her genuine love for him, for their ideals clash. She marries Yayati for pragmatic reasons to gain armies to fight the gods. When Yayati fails in valor, he is an object of

[53] Shekhadiwala, p. 83.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

contempt for her. (*PS*, p. 214).

Devyani's concept of her ideal is conveyed to Yayati who now victorious over Indra, vies with his partner, the *danava* king Vrishaparva, to acquire the Indrasana. Both are enamored by its radiance; and Devyani admonishes Yayati for his servile attitude:

> "Devyani: Oh king, Indra is not evil; *Indrasana* is. It is an epitomy of limitless power, therefore, the source of all misery. He who comprehends Shukracharya's *sanjivani mantra* does not bow, nor does he oppress; if he covets the *Indrasana,* it is only to shatter it to pieces. Did you not recognize the objective of father's command? Till today this *Indrasana* was making one Indra a terror for all; now its broken pieces will set the three worlds free and fearless." (*PS*, p. 235).

Munshi concludes this play on the final note of female assertion. Devyani and Shukracharya are preparing to embark once again in search of their ideal, once Indra regains his power and peace is established in the three worlds under his authority. Indra suggests that Devyani should be spared the endless wanderings with Shukracharya since, after death, she would have to go to the land of Yayati's ancestors (*pitrulok*) as a married woman, and not her father's (*PS*, p. 245). Shukracharya, aware of the irrevocability of the tradition, leaves the decision to his daughter. The last word of determination to even change the convention is Devyani's:

> "Let me see how the *pitrus* separate me from my father! I am going with you, father, in this world and the next. (her eyes widen) I can visualize the freedom and happiness of the liberated world; let us go and get it. (placing her arm on Shukracharya's shoulder, she leads him out.)" (*PS*, p. 246).

This declaration of freedom from authority evokes only a helpless "Oh!" from the king of gods, and a sigh of "Umph!" from the king of men before the final curtain.

Forceful presentation of the theme through powerful characters makes this play one of Munshi's outstanding achievements. In its delineation of quick succession of events, sharp exchange of dialogues, conflict of ideals, the *PS* holds the attention of the audience. However, there are certain weaknesses. Chief among them is the use of the miraculous elements. Shuk-

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

racharya bursts open to revive Kacha, and is in turn revived by him; Yayati becomes young as his son Puru, who agrees to exchange age with his father and becomes old (*PS*, p. 230). Kacha, an important character and vividly drawn in the first two acts, does not contribute to the development of the plot; he is only instrumental in revealing an aspect of Devyani's character. Devyani, more vehement than her father, has weaker feminine aspects as well. She is jealous of and revengeful toward Sharmishtha, who had secretly married Yayati and had two sons by him. The forebearance, forgiveness, and dedication of Sharmishtha win the reader's sympathy more than the spiteful anger of the aggrieved Devyani. Fascinated by both aspects of womanhood, aggressiveness and submission, Munshi portrays them vividly in these two characters.[54]

In this play, Munshi primarily projects political issues rather than retell the story from the *Mahabharata*. *Yayati Akhyana*,[55] the source of the *PS*, centralizes the theme of Yayati's sensuousness. Munshi uses this episode, but it becomes a weak link in the play since it deviates from the central ideology. It is not accidental that the *PS* (1929) and the next mythological plays *Lopamudra*, parts II, III (1933), IV (1934) reflect current political issues. The period between 1928-1930 has been described as the time of Munshi's political maturity, when he was involved in several issues related to the government's discriminatory policies.[56] *LOP* enunciates the theme of discrimination based on caste and color. Umashankar Joshi says, "We must not forget that we get this work (*LOP*) soon after Gandhiji's fast for the *Harijans* in 1932."[57]

The *LOP* is related to prejudices and strife between the Aryans and the Dasyus in the Rigvedic times. Munshi's pro-

[54] Munshi had models of both these qualities in his own life in Atilakshmi and Lilavati.

[55] Durgashankar Shastri elaborates on the source of the play in the 'Note' to *Pauranik Natako*.

[56] Munshi was deeply involved in the Bardoli *Satyagraha*, an important chapter in the Gandhian era in Indian politics.

[57] Gandhi's first appearance in Indian politics was skeptically received by Munshi. He said in *I Follow the Mahatma*, "To me his principles appeared unconvincing, and his methods reactionary." *Munshi* (1947), p. 295. Between 1928-1930 Munshi realized the exact nature of British policy and Gandhi's response to it. On April 14, 1930, he wrote to Gandhi, "In 1920, I left the Congress because at Nagpur you changed its creed; today, in 1930, I rejoin it because I have come to believe that outside that creed there is no honest political life. For long I disapproved of your methods; today except through them, I cannot visualize free India". Ibid., p. 327.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

tagonist, Vishvaratha, inspired by Lopamudra, strives to establish equality between the two races. He challenges the discriminatory attitude, "Is this the *rita* of Varuna? Is this the Truth (*satya*) of our great sages? Repeated prayers to Varuna have not pacified me. How can there be different *ritas* with difference in (skin) color?" (*LOP*, II, p. 48). In the first part "Shambar Kanya," Vishvaratha's marriage with Ugra, the daughter of the Dasyu king Shambar, makes his fight for equality real, intense, and dramatically convincing. "The creative genius of dramatic art would have hardly found another more subtle or effective mode of expression to depict an attack on color discrimination."[58]

The problem is hardly resolved. The votaries of color discrimination Vasishtha[59] and Agastya, are Vishvaratha's chief contenders. Vishvaratha's bold encounters and ultimate resolution of the problem eventually entitle him to be Vishvamitra in part IV. Lopamudra is instrumental in bringing about the conversion of Agastya, whom she loves and eventually marries. "Deve Didheli" (Given by God) part III is centralized on the union of the two. Although the "Shambar Kanya" skilfully integrates action, characterization and effective dialogues, the other two parts are deficient in dramatic achievement. Minor characters like Tugra are not fully developed; they are used as functional devices. Agastya, like Munshi's *rishis* in several other plays, is weak,[60] he is more a fanatic than a revered visionary.

It seems that Munshi's love for the Aryan culture is tempered by his recognition that the *rishis* were full of human frailties. In his plays, therefore, he portrays them as prone to passions of love, greed, and hatred as ordinary people. Munshi's own untraditional, irreverent and realistic attitude is apparent in *LOP*, part I. In its preface Munshi says, "A *rishi* can participate in war and kill thousands." (p. 6) "*Rishis* used to make charms to attract damsels." (p. 7) "They used to ask gifts of a thousand slaves, men and women, from the

[58] The quotations by Umashankar Joshi, *Samasamvedan* 'Sympathetic Appreciation' (Ahmedabad: Vora & Co., 1965), pp. 166 and 172.

[59] Vasishtha was Munshi's protagonist also in *AA*, the play that centers on Munshi's favorite ideology of 'undivided soul.' Munshi often dramatizes varied aspects of the same character in his works—especially the antithetical ones.

[60] For Shukracharya, see discussion of the *PS*. For Yajnavalkya, see Critical Analyses of the *DSD*.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Dasyus; used to get intoxicated on the *soma*... used to exhibit greed and anger... they were prejudiced... It was difficult to trace the parentage of many *rishis* of doubtful origin, and still they were idealistic, devoted, and intent upon truth and penance. They also revealed a tendency to converse with gods off and on... It is difficult to understand their ambiguities. To evaluate them well, one must discard their image created by the *Puranas*." (p. 8) However, Munshi's insistence on the realistic presentation of traditionally glorified *rishis* often deprived them of their dignity.

Munshi failed to resolve the tension between their magnificent traits and their human weaknesses. Munshi's untraditional approach enabled him to portray the Aryans as wicked and the Dasyus and *danavas* as noble people. Suvarṇa, Sharmishtha, Shambari (Ugra), Vrashaparva, Tugra are all non-Aryans who command admiration; conversely, Agastya, Aurva, Vasishtha do not. But this impartiality of Munshi is restrictive. No Dasyu or a *danava* is ultimately victorious. In the final analysis, it is always an Aryan who has recognized his *svadharma*, the *rita*, who becomes Munshi's protagonist.

Social Plays:

As established earlier, Munshi's serious delineation of values was antithetized by the comic, often exaggerated, manifestations of the same values, but both categories aim at bringing about a saner, better world. Is there any perceptible pattern in these effusions of moods? Is there any relationship between these polarities of extremes in treatment? It seems the exuberant, perceptive genius of Munshi did not rest until he had examined the same issue from several perspectives, exploring varied possibilities of form and spirit.

Vava-sheth-nun Swatantrya 'Freedom of Vava sheth' (*VVS*) deals with the theme of freedom of Vava from a domineering, wrathful wife. A similar situation is differently treated in *Prithvi Vallabh* (*PV*), a historical romance published in the same year, 1921. Munj is finally victorious over his extremely powerful beloved-enemy Mrinal. In idiom, execution, and achievement the two works are poles apart. The *VVS* is a farcical play of moderate literary value; the *PV* is acclaimed to be Munshi's historical masterpiece. The conflict in the *VVS*, centralized in Reva and Vava, is resolved by trickery. The

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

conversion of Reva, the taming of a shrew, is achieved by an astrologer's prediction, instigated by Vava, that he was likely to marry again. Exaggerated comic scenes between Reva and Vava, the latter's desire to marry the girl who is his son's beloved, and the clownish son Magan create a series of farcical episodes. Broad humor and dialogues often verge on vulgarity. The comic purpose is, however, served. Reva, who had been opposing her son's desire to marry Radha, readily initiates the marriage negotiations to stop her husband's second marriage.[61] The move also sets Vava free from the domination of his wife; the shrew is tamed in the process.

The conflict between the elder's authority and one's own will, in matters of marriage, is the theme of *Be Kharab Jan* 'Two Bad Guys' (*BKJ*). In the same year Munshi also published the *TAR* dramatizing the love of Sagar and Suvarna clashing with enmity between their elders.[62] In the *TAR*, on the altar of convention the young lovers' feelings are sacrificed. On the other hand in the *BKJ* the elders' authority is not accepted and the lovers are victorious. The motivation of the elders in the Social Play is money, not heroism as in the *TAR*. Solicitor Purshotamdas arranges to marry his liberated daughter, Rambha, to Ramdas for the compensation of Rs. 100,000. Rambha accidentally meets a young, carefree, humorous doctor, Mohan, as she runs away from the stalled car in which she was being carried away for a forced marriage. Mohan emerges as Munshi's most comic character. The *BKJ* ends happily in the marriage of Mohan and Rambha after several intrigues. Munshi's aim is to expose hypocrisy and absurdity of social norms and values.

Mahesh Chokshi considers this play as an unprecedented effort in Gujarati literature to create a truly 'humorous' character in Mohan. "Individual characters (as opposed to types) with comic verve known in English literature as 'humorous' were introduced for the first time by Munshi. Comparatively unknown in Gujarati literature the natural unnaturalness of speech and behavior of these characters creates subtle humor; serious traits apparent in comic behavior, lend them individuality. Mohan's character is a specimen of such art."[63]

[61] Bigamy was made illegal after India became independent in 1947.
[62] Munshi's earlier social novels *Ver ni Vasulat* (1913) and *Kono Vank* (1915) treated this issue seriously.
[63] Choksi, pp. 202-208.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Between the *BKJ* and Munshi's next play *Ajnankita* 'The Obedient' (*AJN*) in 1927, three years passed without any publication, except some miscellaneous literary articles compiled in *Ketlak Lekho* 'Some Articles', 1926. In view of the fact that Munshi had published one, often two works, every year before this, such prolonged silence was unusual. An explanation for this may be found in Munshi's personal life during these years.[64] Once again in 1927, his creative genius is exposed in the play, the *AJN*. The theme, similar to that in the *BKJ*, is of incompatible marriage between the young and the old based on monetary considerations.

The play develops as a satire, not a revue or a farce. The art and the vision of Munshi are more mature in this play than his previous farcical comedies. The central situation in the *AJN* is more complex than in the *BKJ*. Harkisandas marries for the fourth time, a young girl, Savita, who is the fiancee of his nephew Dhirajlal, and pays to her father Rs. 25,000 for his consent. Savita is in love with Joito. The nephew is apparently weak and obediently steps aside, and Joito tries to accept the mis-match gracefully. The turn of events pushes Savita to prostitution. Eventually she undergoes a change of heart under the influence of Joito who protects her like a guardian angel in all situations. Joito is linked with every character: he helps, comments, or makes an observation on everybody with a flair for the comic. Munshi blends in this character a unifying element giving him a chorus-like function. His humorous remarks refresh the prevailing atmosphere of hypocrisy and pain. Besides showing maturity of Munshi's art in the comic medium, this play, the product of his non-creative period, claims no outstanding achievement. It is a mediocre play.

This mediocrity of Munshi is offset by his next play, a brilliant comedy *Kaka ni Shashi* 'Uncle's Shashi' (*KS*), 1929. To counteract his contemporaneous plays, the historical *DSD* and the mythological *PS*, the *KS* mocks at the craze for feminist extremism in modern women, in the character of Shashi. This Ibsenite play, realistic in technique and social criticism, drew the attention of all Gujarat and even today holds a defi-

[64] The period between 1924-1926 was marked by tensions and responsibilities caused by his first wife's death, and threats from Lilavati's husband. The list of "Dates and Events" in *Munshi* (1947) records no publication under 1925 and 1926.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

nite place in Gujarati literature.[65]

The *KS* focuses on the war of the sexes. Munshi holds that the primacy of sexual urge is the basis of all feminist movements. Under the leadership of Shashi, a ward of Manharlal (uncle), a group is formed advocating women's equality.

Each member of the group is depicted as having a strong sexual urge, including Shashi, who takes a vow never to marry. She believes that marriage demeans a woman's position (*KS*, p. 49). Munshi exposes this feminine pretense through a series of humorous situations and characters who strain their nerves to get a man. The main conflict is between Kaka and Shashi. Kaka is absolutely against women's independence and equality; he also considers the basis of men-women relationships rooted in 'biology' not in 'palship', as claimed by Shashi (*KS*, pp. 47-48). Munshi draws a humorous and subtly sarcastic picture of the social behavior and norms related to a variety of relationships, such as platonic love, unification of souls, pure friendship without sex and so on.

The plot is well knit without digressions or long discussions. A motley crowd of various characters representing the upper class educated society of Bombay is vividly presented; but Munshi develops the two central characters fully while the rest fill up the canvas. The minor characters, however, are realistic and full of life. The typical characters like Durlabhram, Vallabhram, and Gulabdas, like Dickens' characters, have distinct personalities. Caricatures, like the weakling Indrajit or submissive Vidhumukhi, and sentimental Gaurishankar are memorable characters. Short, crisp dialogues and absence of soliloquies made this play a great success on stage.

The votary of women's equality, Munshi, is critical of the fad that had captured some sections of women in Gujarat, and Gujarati women in cities like Bombay. He admired their forwardness compared with that in other communities in other states, but he ridiculed extremism. As is common in most of Munshi's works, the *KS* also ends with Shashi's surrender to Kaka's point of view. She proposes marriage to him, he accepts it and the reader and the audience are dumbfounded. This situation and its development are artistically and ideally not acceptable. Not only has there been a great difference in

[65] Nayak and Patel, p. 170.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

their ages, but Kaka has been Shashi's foster parent ever since she was a baby. The grandeur of his selfless dedication and love motivates her to make such an astounding proposal; and surprisingly he accepts it. This is dramatically most unconvincing. This method of introducing improbable events to conclude the play, to strike a note of sanity, is a characteristic of Munshi's technique.[66] The contrived end reduces the *KS* from being a powerful social comedy to a sentimental play. Munshi propounds his faith in the ideal that, for conjugal love, difference in age or other social bearings are immaterial; the only important ingredient of a happy, married life is mutual understanding, close association and selfless dedication. In the victory of Kaka's point of view that, women's idea of liberation was an off-shoot of Westernism (*KS*, pp. 93-94), Munshi projects one more paradoxical facet of his ideology besides his flair for male dominance.

Munshi's next social play *Brahmacharyashrama* 'The Stage of Abstinence' (*BRH*), 1933, handles the same theme of the fight against the sexual urge and exposes inherent hypocrisy from a different stance. Munshi presents a male club of anti-feminists. All of them are intellectuals, lawyers, doctors, professors, who are influenced by Gandhi's ideas on abstinence from sex. Munshi says, "In this play I have mocked at some values I have elsewhere admired." To visualize a theme related to all males cast under the influence of Gandhi, while Munshi himself was in prison, was not altogether accidental. The male group in this play is more rigid than the female group in the *KS*. All men take a vow never to have any contact with women. Like Shakespeare's *Love's Labours Lost,* the falsity of anti-sex notions is exposed. The theme resembles Tagore's *Chirakumara Sabha* 'The Bachelor Club.' Munshi also deflates the romantic idealism of platonic love propounded by Nanalal in his plays.

Munshi's attitude towards love and sex is of the earth, earthy and realistic. Unlike the *KS,* where a male character is the bringer of sanity, in this play, the *BRH,* an illiterate female cook, Pemli, unconsciously becomes an instrument in men's realization of truth. She is the only female character in this

[66] There exists a controversy regarding contrived conclusions of Munshi's plays. For example, Choksi considers the end of the *KS* natural and consistent. Choksi, p. 193.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

play arousing the suppressed sex instincts of the intellectual snobs. She is used as a dramatic device to underline the contradiction between the inmates' vows and behaviour. The play lacks action, and primarily becomes a discussion play. The first half of the play is devoted to deliberations as to the plan. On the stage, therefore, the play may not be a great success, but as a satire, it provides enjoyable reading.

Man's disillusionment in love is the theme of Munshi's next play *Pidagrasta Professor*. 'The Afflicted Professor' (*PID*), 1934. In technique it resembles the *LOP*, part play, part novel, published in the same year. The *PID* is a dramatization of Munshi's long short-story *Sneha Sambhram* 'An Illusion of Love,' 1931. This is another instance of Munshi's itch to express the same ideology in different literary forms and perspectives. But it has another context. Between January 1932 and December 1933 Munshi was in Bijapur jail, arrested for his nationalistic activities under the leadership of Gandhi.[67] During this period Munshi's multifaceted art manifested itself in varied genres, as though his genius was seeking a balance. Within this time span, Munshi wrote an autobiography, biographies, novels, essays, serious plays, and comedies. His essays were related to Indian and Western literary critical theories in *Thodank Rasa Darshano*; in *Adivachano*, the subjects of his essays were history, politics and literature.[68]

In the *PID*, Professor Pritamlal is a dandyish and friendly member of the faculty, especially popular among his female students. He falls in love with Joravar's wife though his own wife Dhankor suspects a college student as the object of his fascination. Joravar, like Kaka of the *KS*, had brought up the girl whom he had eventually married (p. 80). But unlike Kaka, he is an illiterate, wicked and mean person. He somehow manages to bring the indiscreet lovers to their senses. The *PID* is a sort of a dramatic exercise, since Joravar, a minor character in the story, plays an important role in the drama. In spite of his ignoble qualities, he seems to represent Munshi's common sense and humor, the potentials of which were noticed by Munshi as he drew his character in the short novel.

[67] *Munshi* (1947), p. xix.

[68] See Bibliography of Munshi's works for works published in 1932-1933. The initial period in jail was non-creative, which disturbed Munshi. 'Preface' to the *SS*. Then came the period of creative exuberance.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Is Joravar an unselfconscious creation of Munshi? A similar question arises in reference to Ramagupta in the *DSD,* Munshi's anti-hero who steals the play with his down-to-earth realism and humanness. Munshi's perception of reality, and insight for the comic, seem as powerful as his romantic ideology and the urge for self-portrayal. In this comedy, the *PID,* he lets his anti-hero win, to bring the romantic lover to his senses. Conversely, in the *DSD,* a serious play, the idealistic hero Chandragupta destroys Ramagupta, who also embodies evil. Though the techniques are contrasting, the emergent conclusions do not seem contradictory, since both the plays establish wholesome values for a healthy society.

Dr. Madhurika (*DR*), 1936, exposes yet another feminist craze. Munshi ridicules the Westernized ideal of contractual marriage through Dr. Madhurika, who marries Narendra, a barrister, on two conditions. She does not want children, and she wants freedom to mix with her male friends. This develops mental tensions and jealousies which are ultimately resolved by a sudden change of heart of Madhurika. Munshi portrays conflicting passions in her. Being career-oriented, she ignores some fundamentals of the love-relationship; but she is jealous of Vasanti, a friend's daughter, who invokes parental instincts in Narendra. The happy ending is brought about by the awakening of dormant motherhood in Madhurika. There are some inconsistencies in her characterization: sensible in the earlier part of the play, she is irrational in her behavior toward Narendra in the latter. Munshi has thrown together several problems that career-minded women face, but their presentation falls between the comic and the pathetic, for none of the characters is convincing. Munshi was aware of the deficiencies of this play and its artificial blend. In the preface to an edition of the play, thirteen years later, he said that he clearly saw the deficiencies, but changing them then would entail a change of the entire theme.[69]

The date of publication of Munshi's hilarious play, *Chhie Tej Thik* 'Best as We Are' (*CTT*), is not certain, but it is approximately 1946. It focuses on the ideal of changing personalities by exchanging souls between two lovers intending to marry. Like a situation comedy it creates good farcical humor.

[69] 'Preface' to *Dr. Madhurika.*

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

But the purpose is to lash at Gujarati men who were becoming effeminate under the impact of love for Westernism and developing a servile, submissive attitude. Conversely, women under the same impact, were becoming immodest, insolent and artificial. Munshi's satire exposes the hypocritical attitude in both men and women under the impact. The play has little literary value, but it became immensely popular because of its topical interest. Crisp dialogues and fast action make it a stageable play; it has been performed several times. Jitendra and Urvashi, the chief characters, realize the futility of their ideal and conclude that a change of heart was more important than exchanging souls. The conclusion harps on the theme, as the title suggests, "We are best as we are."

Munshi's attitude to the feminist movement reflects the inherent irresolution of the conflict women face—the conflict between being a woman and a man and a man at once. However, Munshi's harmonizing self advocates the middle way—the sane way—of being liberated with restrictions, an attitude manifested in all of his women characters. Devyani, who flouts such compromise, emerges as more ruthless than her father.

After a considerable lapse of time, in 1953, was published a fantasy, *Vah Re Men Vah* 'Kudos To Me' (*VAH*) which was originally conceived in 1948, soon after the police action in Hyderabad where Munshi was appointed Agent General.[70] The risk and uncertainty involved in this political mission triggered Munshi's imagination. He wrote a fantasy in which he mocked at, in his own words, "Great men, revered men and most of all, myself." (p. 2). Munshi has described it as *asambhava* 'improbable,' mockery 'born out of a dream after indigestion.' "To laugh at one's self is not a normal characteristic among people. I happen to have it, so why should I not exaggerate it?" (Preface, p. 1). The play dramatizes, or fantasizes, Munshi's fear of undertaking the responsibility of the Agent General. Self-analytical Munshi, while occupying the position of the Governor of U.P., laughs at himself in this play—exposing another dimension of his paradoxical complex.

In this fantasy, Munshi is anxiously awaiting instructions from Sardar Patel and jumps up every time the phone rings. He is lecturing his daughter on the importance of *yoga* to

[70] For details see *Munshi* Vol. II (1957), pp. 178-220.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

counteract fear. After some time, he suddenly dozes off and the dream begins. Women characters from his literary works appear and blame him for all the misfortunes he let them undergo in his novels and plays. Among them are Arundhati from the *AA*, Lopamudra from the *LOP*, Manjri from the *GN* and the *RR*, Pemli from the *BRH*, Urvashi from the *CTT*, and Tanman from the *VV* who provide a motley collection of styles in dialogue and ideas ranging from the Vedic times to twentieth century Westernized India. The scene is hilarious as Munshi helplessly tries to defend his stance. Tanman, his original dream girl, his first heroine, comes to his rescue.

The fun is extended, as after a short interlude of awakened moments, Munshi again falls asleep. Now he dreams of all the male characters, who advise him on his mission in Hyderabad. Chief among them is cowardly Ramagupta of the *DSD*, who strongly advises Munshi against accepting the responsibility. The scene closes with Ramagupta's concluding remarks: "Munshi, you are a great fool;" to which Munshi responds, "Yes, I know" (*VAH*, p. 85).

The third Act introduces Munshi's heroic characters, who suggest different ways of handling the Hyderabad situation. Each suggestion is compatible with the personality of that character. Kak of the *GN* and the *RR* incites him to show heroic valor, Munj of the *PV* suggests that Munshi should embrace death heroically with a smile, Daddanath of the *BHP* invokes him to drink the blood of the enemy. Parashurama challenges his heroism: "My son, a coward?" As Munshi, out of fright, hides behind a sofa, Parashurama's last words are heard: "Let him rot where he is." The dream vanishes as Mrs. Munshi finds Munshi rising from behind the sofa. Intuitively she understands his fear and sings to boost up his spirits: "Oh, my valorous husband, may you leave for the war," a popular heroic song of the time.

In this fantasy, Munshi assembles characters from his family, friends, politics, and imaginative writings. This fantasy provides a complex situation suspended between criticism and admiration of Munshi himself. As a literary work *VAH* has no or little value, but it draws a vivid picture of Munshi's mind, art, his antithetical personality concretized in his characters. It was quite successful on stage.

The play is a testimony to Munshi's ability to stand away

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

from himself and his works and evaluate them, despite his near-narcissist obsession for self-expression. Yet his self-mockery is indirectly a self-glorification which is evident in the self-confident undertone of the entire play. Historically, Munshi's mission in Hyderabad in 1947 was successful, and therefore in 1953, an exposition of his previous fear becomes an indirect mode of self-compliment.

Munshi mixes all four elements of comedy: wit, humor, farce, and satire in varied proportions with their accompanying functions to jest, to laugh, to entertain and to chastise. Critics have derided Munshi's creation of an absurd world, often improbable, vulgar, and farcical as demeaning to his genius. They find it hard to accept such plays from the writer of *Jay Somnath* and the founder of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.[71]

The greatest writers have shown a tendency to buffoonery, in varied ways. Somerset Maugham in *The Summing Up* says, "The greatest writers of comedy, Shakespeare, Moliere, and Bernard Shaw, have jibbed at the farcical. It is the life blood that makes the body of comedy viable."[72] The Shavian fool testifies to intellectual vivacity; in Moliere, farce and satire emerge as born companions.

Munshi's comic spirit falls between Shaw's intellectual and Moliere's farcical-chastising spirit. Munshi's farcical plays display a verve for intellectual vivacity, verging on absurdity with a purpose to chastise. In his best comedies, the *KS*, the *CTT*, and the *BKJ*, these elements are well integrated. In the weakest, they remain diffused. The broad humor and the obscenity of the *Bhavai* in Munshi's plays are transformed. Munshi's dramatic art, well-knit plots, vivid characterization,

[71] Munshi's social plays have been heavily criticized by D. Desai (*Granth*), in his rather passionate approach to Munshi's works. He complains, "Why did the man who created single-handedly, an institution like the Bhavan not make more vigorous efforts to improve the Gujarati stage?..Munshi could have attempted a synthesis of the best from the Western theater and the Indian traditions. ..It is a matter of regret that he did not bring to the Gujarati stage even one-tenth of what the 'Neighborhood Playhouse' or the 'Washington Square Playhouse' did in the years following 1914". *Granth* (1971), pp. 120-128. Desai's criticism reveals two deficiencies: He concentrates only on the weak side of Munshi's plays and evaluates him by irrelevant standards of the experimental and far advanced theatrical standards of the West. He should have evaluated Munshi in the context of his times.

[72] Somerset Maugham, *The Summing Up* (New York: Double Day, 1938), p. 144.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

and the comic vision aimed at a saner and better world, made an important contribution to Gujarati drama. He brought comedy to the respectable stage enjoyed by urban middle class society. Munshi's plays were addressed to this audience, as were his literary and constructive activities. Millions of illiterate masses in villages who were entertained by the *Bhavai,* or a mixed literate-illiterate audience of the professional theater in town and cities, did not constitute Munshi's audience. His was more selective in economic and intellectual level, audience similar to that of his immediate literary predecessors. His audience exerted a restrictive influence on his plays. Munshi, however, by combining the popular and literary elements in his plays, widened the scope of Gujarati drama and extended the appeal of his plays to a much larger audience than his predecessors.

By the second decade of the twentieth century, the political scene in India had been influenced by the varied nationalist programs of Aurobindo, Bose, Tilak, Besant and Gandhi. Educated urban masses were increasing in number. The spread of education had captured a new consciousness among people including women. They were all seeking a national identity, freedom, autonomous government and democratic principles. Such upheaval is projected in Munshi's works reflecting its positive and negative ramifications. His mythological and historical plays propagated positive values, his social plays exposed the negative. The latter were popular, despite their dramatic imperfections; for people could laugh at their own follies in the four walls of the theater.

People watch drama in order to organize and confirm their experience of society, particularly with reference to socially approved behavior. Popular drama, therefore, is likely to function not only as an expressive element of culture (monitoring morality) but as an instrumental aspect of culture (determining the prevailing traits).[73] Munshi's plays fulfilled both the functions of reflecting society as well as formulating cultural consciousness. His social plays reflect sociological behavior, the mythological plays aim at monitoring heroic ideology.

[73] J. S. R. Goodlad, *Sociology of Popular Drama* (New Jersey: Rowan and Littlewood, 1971), p. 193.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

The element of entertainment won for Munshi's social plays a greater popularity, despite their inferior artistic achievement. However, it must be remembered that social acceptability and artistic originality or accomplishment do not always coincide. The artistic lapses in his mythological plays did not reduce their popularity. Munshi has sustained, however, in his historical play, the *DSD,* the artistic originality and popular elements in a fine balance.

In his mythological plays, Munshi transforms the prevalent literary traditions in several ways. The themes of the plays in this genre before Munshi were taken largely from the popular stories from the epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata.* Munshi derived his material from farther antiquity, the period of the early Aryans. Although this element appealed largely to the intellectuals in the audience, Munshi made his themes universal by portraying the fundamental human passions of love, ambition, greed, jealousy, mingling them with contemporary issues of political freedom and social equality. Munshi was criticized for such a conglomeration. He was alleged to have used history only to project stories that could have easily been cast against a contemporary backdrop.[74] Such criticisms ignored the fundamentals of an artist's vision, for it was impossible for Munshi to visualize cultural regeneration without drawing heroic ideals from the past. The dwarfish image of contemporary society stirred within him pathos that he often sentimentalized or mocked at.[75]

A controversial issue in Munshi's works is the issue of the supernatural.[76] Some critics[77] have considered the use of the miraculous episodes as dramatic deficiencies, others justify the use of the supernatural since it is derived from the source material and therefore is inevitable.[78] Munshi's retention of the miraculous has led critics to equate him with an *akhyanakara,* whose primary motive was to make the story interesting.[79]

Munshi, who freely changed sequences and characters

[74] Jadeja, in *Granth,* p. 108.

[75] In the *TAP,* Munshi draws an ideal of a lady sage, but only when in 1957-1958, the period described in had become 'the remembered past' for Munshi—the period between 1857-1937.

[76] Chyavan and Yayati regain their youth, Shukracharya bursts open to revive 'crushed and swallowed' Kacha, who in turn relieves Shukracharya.

[77] Shekhadiwala, in *Granth,* p. 78. [78] Choksi p. 224.

[79] Munshi has been compared with Shamal, a well-known Gujarati *akhyanakara* 'religious story teller' who excelled in the art.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

from his source material, could have deviated from the miraculous episodes, as he did in the *KA* to describe Krishna's miraculous childhood, had he so desired. He could have subtly employed the supernatural as Shakespeare used the moving of Burnam wood in *Macbeth.* Instead, the stage directions in the *PPJ* read: "Ashvinas are seen going away in the sky" or "Young Chyavana stands by his body, stricken with old age," which defy artistic conviction. The use of the miraculous in the *PS* is mentioned before.

Munshi's love for the miraculous had deep roots. A highly imaginative nature in his childhood used to transport Munshi into the dream world of the *Arabian Nights* (*AR,* pp. 87-88). Munshi, who enjoyed writing a dream fantasy in 1953 at the age of sixty-six, seems to have retained a taste for imaginary improbabilities. Hence, the inclusion of the miraculous in his mythological plays may be once again attributed to the triumph of the man over the artist. As established earlier, Munshi's dramatic vision was restricted by his self-love. He never achieved the highest level of dramatic detachment that master dramatists reveal.

While scholars have admired Munshi's contribution to Gujarati drama in bringing the influence of Shaw and Ibsen, some have criticized him for not reaching their level in dramatic art. The critics maintain that Munshi's characters, especially in his social plays, remain superficial; his dialogues are not dynamic; his comedies are farcical; and the conclusions in his plays are contrived, often improbable in comedies, melodramatic in serious plays. Munshi's female characters often shine at the cost of the male characters in the major part of the play, and at the end surrender to them, creating dramatic inconsistency. Often there are too many characters on the stage giving an impression of action.

Much of this criticism is valid, though only partially. Munshi's literary career lasted long, and was too varied to sustain a consistent level of creation. Over the period of sixty years of his creativity, the criticism also varied. Munshi's severest critics, however, cannot but accept the fact that he pioneered the rejuvenation of Gujarati drama, and gave it a new direction and a new form. His best and most representative achievement in this genre is *Dhruvasvaminidevi.*

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

CHAPTER V

Critical Analysis of 'Dhruvasvaminidevi'

Summary:

ACT I

The scene opens in Pataliputra.

Kalidasa, later a poet of repute, but now only a dandyish, young poetic lover and friend of Chandragupta, awaits his beloved Madhavi in the palace garden. The lovers' silly talk also reveals some important matters regarding the royal family. Madhavi conveys that Dhruvadevi is upset because her husband, Ramagupta, proposes a visit to her palace, despite her vow of abstinence.

Chandragupta has returned from the war front after two years, mentions Kalidasa, to take along Ramagupta to Ujjayini to inspire the demoralised Gupta armies, which have been resisting attacks of the Shaka King Rudrasena.

Engrossed in his volptuous pleasures, Ramagupta has no time for talks of war or heroic exploits. Chandragupta meets with Dhruvadevi, with the hope that she might bring some pressure on Ramagupta. Once vocal and volatile, Dhruvadevi has now virtually withdrawn herself from the outside world.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

She burns within, but keeps a cool, distant and dignified exterior. Chandragupta recognizes this and pained by the manifestations of Dhruvadevi's inner agony, he attempts to probe her mind. But she is too proud to let him delve deeper into her mind.

Nobody, including the queen mother, Dattadevi, is able to persuade Ramagupta to go to Ujjayini. Witnessing her husband's worthlessness, realizing the pressing need of the hour, and admiring Chandragupta's selfless sense of commitment, Dhruvadevi takes over Ramagupta's responsibility to inspire the armies. She volunteers to go to Ujjayini. Enthused by this, Chandragupta determines to take Ramagupta, even forcefully.

ACT II

The scene opens in Ujjayini, two and a half months later.

The defeated Gupta warriors are waiting for Harisena, the Minister of War and Peace, to return from the Shaka king with the terms of the treaty. Rudrasena, the Shaka king, himself arrives in the court with his warriors to declare his demands. His sense of revenge being intensified by the memories of previous defeats at the hand of the Guptas, Rudrasena is anxious to cash in on this rare opportunity. He demands evacuation of Ujjayini, which he wants to pull down, and the possession of Anarta and Malawa along with numerous horses, chariots, elephants and gold coins. Harisena implores Rudrasena to reconsider his impossible demands.

At this point Dhruvadevi enters. Stunned by the beauty of the queen, Rudrasena changes his mind and asks for Dhruvadevi instead. The atrocious suggestion of giving away the queen of the Guptas to Rudrasena infuriates everyone except the king and husband, Ramagupta. Whether Dhruvadevi lives in Ujjayini or Surashtra hardly matters to him. He is too eager to go to his pleasure groves to worry about the honor of his wife, family or people. His lust for life rules supreme.

At first raging mad at impudent Rudrasena, Chandragupta conceives a plan and declares that he would also comply with the Shaka's ignoble demand. Chandragupta disguised as Dhruvadevi goes to Rudrasena's camp with a few of his trusted soldiers. Dhruvadevi, scared and worried about Chandragupta's safety, informs Commander General Undan about

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Chandragupta's move, urging him to go to his rescue. Undan leaves with soldiers who are anxious to sacrifice their lives for the honor of the country and the prince. After long hours of anxious wait, Dhruvadevi sees Chandragupta returning victorious.

At this moment at the command of Ramagupta, his scheming aide Guhasena, forcibly carries away Dhruvadevi; she is taken back to Pataliputra along with Ramagupta's returning retinue. Chandragupta enters the palace, wounded but exultant, to give the news of his victory to Dhruvadevi, for whose honor he had risked his life. On hearing that she was forcibly taken away, he feels the pain of his wounds afresh; weak and dejected, he collapses.

ACT III

The scene opens in Pataliputra (Kusumpur), about five months later.

Chandragupta having gone insane with remorse arrives in Pataliputra with the Buddhist monk Vasubandhu. The prince has decided to renounce the world. Ramagupta's regime is not safe for him, and his life away from Dhruvadevi seems meaningless to him. Kalidasa, Dattadevi, Undan, Harisena, Ramagupta and Dhruvadevi all arrive at different times near Yajnavalkya's *ashrama* where Chandragupta is to pay a visit. Everybody, except Ramagupta, is pained by Chandragupta's mental condition. In his insanity he repeatedly talks about hearing the crying horses of Samudragupta, his father. Once alone with Dhruvadevi, Chandragupta reveals his insanity to be a pretense, an excuse to see Dhruvadevi before renouncing the world and to remain at arm's length from Ramagupta. Their emotional talk is interrupted by the reentry of intoxicated Ramagupta, who orders his aide Guhasena to kill Chandragupta. The insane prince defies Guhasena, attacks Ramagupta, and strangles him to death.

Since Chandragupta is insane, Vatsya, the clever Chief Minister, recommends Ramagupta's half brother Skandagupta to succeed as the ruler of the land. His suggestion is unacceptable to almost everybody present. Harisena, who takes his cue from the mad prattling of Chandragupta, suggests that Dhruvadevi be declared the ruling queen. The reverend guru Yajnavalkya and the queen mother Dattadevi, endorse the sug-

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

gestion, and Dhruvadevi becomes the ruling queen. At this very moment news of a joint attack by the kings of Vakataka and the Shakas arrives. Chandragupta, continuing to pretend insanity, announces his decision to go to fight the battle. The armies leave, Chandragupta leaves and Dhruvadevi remains, once again lonely, but an empress.

ACT IV

The scene opens in Pataliputra about five months later, at midnight.

Pataliputra is torn by civil war. Taking advantage of the absent army fighting the Shakas, the supporters of Skandagupta venture to acquire power at home. Dhruvadevi, who is virtually imprisoned in the palace along with her supporters for the last twenty-eight days, tries to defend the palace. Food stores run low and her supporters defect every day. She has sent messages to Chandragupta and is eagerly awaiting his return.

Suddenly, Chandragupta enters the scene through a back window of the palace. He has returned after defeating the Shakas and having conquered Surashtra, an additional territory for Dhruvadevi's kingdom. After a long period of time and a spell of turmoil, Dhruvadevi and Chandragupta have a respite to talk about their personal feelings. Their love can never be made public, and they cannot bear the agony of remaining separate, distant entities. The conflict between love and duty burns them within. Kalidasa recites verses from his poem *Kumarasambhavam* that concretize their agony. Talks of love and poetry are terminated by Skandagupta, who breaks open the palace gates and enters the front hall with his supporters.

Chandragupta visualizes his probable death and immediately decides to get his marriage with Dhruvadevi solemnized before Skandagupta comes closer. Hearing the commotion, Dattadevi and Yajnavalkya arrive on the scene, approve of their marriage, and bless their union. Chandragupta himself opens the door of the inner hall, surprising Skandagupta, Vatsya and their supporters. They are embarrassed and yield to Chandragupta who is proclaimed the king of kings.

Analysis:

Munshi's idealism of cultural regeneration is represented

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

through the character of Chandragupta II, the valiant Gupta prince. Elsewhere Munshi says of him, "In the collective unconscious of India, he (Chandragupta) symbolized the highest aspiration of national greatness."[1] He is Munshi's stereotype heroic character with super-human potentials, which annihilate the demonic powers represented by Ramagupta and Rudrasena. Chandragupta also embodies Munshi's characteristic paradox of the traditional and non-traditional traits. Whereas the noble prince protects the valuable traditions established by his father Samudragupta and guru Yajnavalkya, he also flouts self-destructive traditions, reinforcing personal and social regeneration. He kills his king brother Ramagupta and marries his widow whom he deeply loves. The apparent social and moral unacceptability of these two acts[2] is dramatized by Munshi as an admirable act of social and political rejuvenation blessed by the highest priest of the State, Yajnavalkya, and Chandragupta's mother Dattadevi. At the end of the play, one is made aware of the beginning of the rule of Chandragupta Vikramaditya, who represented the apex of the Gupta period.

This nationalistic theme also has a personal dimension. The incompatible marriage of Dhruvadevi and Ramagupta, the gradual resurgence of love between Dhruvadevi and Chandragupta, and their antecedent inner and outer conflicts have simultaneously a social and personal frame of reference for Munshi. The early twentieth century social problems of incompatible marriages and restrictions on widow remarriage had relevance in Munshi's personal life. Munshi and Chandragupta both married widows in ages when conservative society was still opposed to widow remarriage.

Thus the *DSD* represents the ideal central to Munshi's vision, the culmination of an ideal in the conciliation of personal desires (*preya*) and communal good (*shreya*). Unlike Munshi's mythological and historical works, the play ends in the reconciliation of these two elements, not the rejection of the *preya* for the *shreya*. Chandragupta's heroic mission to

[1] K. M. Munshi, "Foreword" to *The History and Culture of Indian People*, ed., R. C. Majumdar (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1954), III., xii.

[2] "Again, while the murder of a brother for the sake of kingdom is by no means usual, the marriage of his brother's widow by the rebel regicide clashes with our cherished notions about morality and social custom prevalent in those times." R. C. Majumdar and A. R. Altekar, *The Vakataka-Gupta Age* (Varanasi: Motilal Banarasidas, 1967), p. 168.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

maintain *dharmarajya* is not jeopardized by his marriage with an allegedly stigmatized widow, the supposed 'destroyer of the family.'

As a drama, the *DSD* reveals Munshi's most positive and least negative traits. Action and conflict, progenitors of dramatic tension, hold the attention of the audience and the readers alike. Munshi maintains interest by a well-knit plot and rising suspense, the art he learnt and mastered from his readings of Western literary works. Despite the historical theme of the play related to the fourth century A.D. in India, the dialogues are written in the everyday language of the twentieth century. The exceptions are the terms of address and heroic rhetoric. Munshi accomplishes a dual objective through this linguistic admixture: he releases the drama from stylized prose, bringing it to the level of everyday language; and retains its historical fervor by the use of Sanskritized terms and epithets. Kalidasa's verses and heraldic proclamations add to the historical coloration. The two distinct aspects of the language smoothly blend, offering the reader a perception of antiquity in its modern context.

Munshi also learnt his art of dramatization from Sanskrit drama, especially that of creating *rasa* (flavor).[3] He follows the *rasa* theory to mean only a creation of the state of mind, without adhering to the specific pattern of dominant emotions appropriate for different categories of drama, as prescribed in the *Natyashastra.* Of the eight *rasas,* the heroic in Act II, the pathetic in Act III, and the erotic in Act IV, are the dominant *rasas.* In the depiction of the erotic in Act IV, the *DSD* comes closest to the technique of a Sanskrit play. For the proper infusion of the erotic, the outward action is minimized in the earlier part of the Act; and the Act is experienced as a poem.

Both Chandragupta and Dhruvadevi are familiar, repeat projections of Munshi's stereotyped heroic characters discussed in earlier chapters, and tend to lose freshness. But Munshi's effective portrayal is of the villain, King Ramagupta. He is very human and pulsates as a profligate immersed in debauchery and drunkenness. It may seem ironical that despite Munshi's involvement with the portrayal of personal idealism

[3] Munshi discusses the relationship between *rasa* and the creation of beauty, *sarasata,* in *Thodank Rasadarshano,* p. 14.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

in his works, his antagonist is dramatically a better realized character than the protagonist. This may be interpreted as a manifestation of both Munshi's ability to grasp the opposites effectively, and of the fact that villainy has a greater human interest than nobility.[4] His immense faith in the joy of life is well blended with his awareness of its probable perversity. Ramagupta represents self-destructive passion for pleasure. In the vivid portrayals of the opposing character of the two brothers, Munshi's ability as a lawyer to advocate either side is evident, further revealing a syncretization of the subjective and the objective elements.

The *DSD,* like Munshi's other works, is a conglomeration of antithetical aspects of Munshi's art and vision. His concept of the individual and national objectives is delineated through his dramatic art learnt from the literature of the East and the West. He escapes into the past to derive meaning for the understanding of the present. History and fragmentary records are blended with imagination to create an organic whole. He projects paradoxical passions through conflict of values. Does Munshi create a well-syncretized product from these antitheses? One may deduce that Munshi's primary objective is not merely to maintain consistency with any one criterion or attain artistic perfection in technique; his main interest lies in the depiction of his favorite themes and ideology. This is central to Munshi's art and is well illustrated in the *DSD.*

History in the DSD:

Himself a keen student of history, Munshi claims that his literary works dealing with history and mythology may not be read as history; they are only romances. Although Munshi is criticized for the lack of accuracy or indifference in the treatment of history in his literary works, the *DSD* reveals a great respect for historical milieu in the details of ideas, costume, language, and setting.

In the "Background" to the *DSD,* Munshi refers to the fragments of a lost Sanskrit play *Devichandraguptam,* by Vishakhadatta of the sixth century A.D.[5] The *DSD* is based on

[4] Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost* is more life-like than God: Munshi's Kansa in the *KA* vibrates with life.

[5] Majumdar accepts this date and also mentions other dates assigned by different writers. Majumdar and Altekar, p. 162.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

this literary source of disputed historicity.[6] Munshi has added "some other historical evidences and imaginary details" to reconstruct this play.

Other literary and epigraphic sources have been assimilated by scholars to recreate the story of Ramagupta.[7] The literary evidences are Bana's *Harsha Charita* (620 A.D.), Ramachandra's and Gunachandra's *Natyadarpana,* and Rajashekhara's *Kavyamimamsa* (IX, 47) of 900 A.D. Epigraphic evidences include copper plates of Sanjan (781 A.D.), Cambay (930 A.D.), and Sangali (933 A.D.).[8] From these evidences the following story is reconstructed by scholars:

> Ramagupta, an impotent (*kliba*) king, for the sake of his subjects, was bent upon surrendering his queen, Dhruvadevi, to the Shaka Chief invading his kingdom. Then, his younger brother Prince Chandragupta, resolved to save the situation, went to the camp of the Shaka Chief disguised as the queen, and killed him, as he came up to him. Chandragupta then killed his cowardly brother and married his widow, Dhruvadevi.[9]

Munshi dramatized the period of *probable* history between the glorious rules of Samudragupta and Chandragupta II, foiled by the weak reign of Ramagupta.[10] The two valorous kings symbolize the glory of Aryan culture. In his "Background" to the *DSD,* Munshi refers to the Allahabad inscription depicting Samudragupta's valor, munificence, and patronage of learning and righteousness. He calls Samudragupta the "consecrator of the Indian cultural tradition." This glory and spiritual presence of Parakramadeva are echoed in the play till the very end. About Chandragupta II, in his "Foreword" to *The History and Culture of Indian People* vol. III, Munshi says, "Under the leadership of Chandragupta II, the Gupta eagles flew over

[6] Professor Levi doubts the historical truth based on literary sources in *Journal Asiatique,* CC II, pp. 201 ff.

[7] Basham refers to P. L. Gupta, Altekar and A. K. Narain, *Journal of Numismatic Society of India* xxii, 1950, p. 521.

[8] R. K. Mookherji, *The Gupta Empire* (Bombay: Hind Kitabs, 1947), pp, 66-67. References to other inquiries on the subject in Majumdar and Altekar p. 161 fn.

[9] Mookerji, p. 66.

[10] For Samudragupta's personality, see Majumdar and Altekar, pp. 137-160. Professor Levi has called Samudragupta a Napoleon of India, who was once Munshi's ideal. Munshi's only deviation from history seems to be the date of his death, 380 A. D. according to Majumdar and Altekar, p. 159, and R. K. Mookerji p. 17. Munshi gives the date as 387 A. D., bringing it close to the date (388-389 A. D.) of Chandragupta II's final defeat of the Shakas.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

parts of Balkh across the Hindukush. Peace, plenty and power, associated with an all-pervading moral sense, were, in his reign, integrated with an intellectual and cultural efflorescence, and to the mind of succeeding generations, it symbolizes the fulfilment of the highest national aspirations."[11]

The passage reveals Munshi, the typical romantic historian, who interprets the past in India's present frame of reference. Since, for Munshi, history was not just a dry search for facts, it had meaning only in the context of the present and the future. Munshi warns against the danger of narrow scholarship, "Our modern scholarship, in imitation of Western scholarship, looks upon the study of Indian culture as a study of a laboratory specimen, something dead and gone and finished which is not under an active process of reintegration."[12] The *DSD* is primarily a story of the growth and realization of love between Chandragupta and Dhruvadevi, against the background of history.

Vishakhadatta uses the name Dhruvadevi, Munshi selects Rajashekhara's Dhruvasvaminidevi,[13] as does Jai Shankar Prasad later in his Hindi play, *Dhruvasvamini*.[14] The Allahabad inscription refers to different kinds of homages paid by different provinces to Samudragupta: personal attendance, presenting unmarried daughters and giving them away in marriage, and soliciting imperial charters.[15] Prasad attributes Dhruvadevi's marriage with Ramagupta to one such homage. Achyutadeva, the father of Dhruvadevi, defeated by Samudragupta, very likely gave her away as a gift to the victorious king. Prasad portrays Chandragupta as the official escort who brings Dhruvadevi to Samudragupta's Court, to be married to his elder brother, Ramagupta. This is the basis of Ramagupta's suspicion of soft feelings between his heroic brother and his egoistic wife.[16]

Munshi rejects this 'probable' history. Madhavi, in Act I, wonders if Chandragupta had ever seen Dhruvadevi before.

[11] Munshi, "Foreword" *HCIP*, III, xii.
[12] Munshi, *The Creative Art of Life*, p. 35.
[13] *Kavyamimamsa* IX, 47. There is also a reference to "Mahadevi Shri Dhruvasvaminidevi" in a clap-seal at Vaishali. Majumdar and Altekar, p. 180.
[14] Jai Shankar Prasad, "Note" to *Dhruvasvamini* (Allahabad: Bhima, 1934), p. 10.
[15] These are respectively: *Atmanivedana, Kanyopayanadana Garutmadanka-svavishaya-bhukti-shasana-yachana.* Majumdar and Altekar, p. 148.
[16] Prasad's "Note" to his play and Act I, pp. 10, & 19.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Again, Chandragupta refers to paying his first respects to Dhruvadevi. To Munshi, the supporter of the movement for women's equality, Samudragupta's acceptance of Achyutadeva's unmarried daughter might have seemed incongruous to the resplendent glory of the munificent king. Munshi's propagator of *dharmarajya* could not have indulged in such an ignominious act. Munshi, however, is inconsistent. Although in Act I, he rejects the probability of Chandragupta's having escorted Dhruvadevi to Pataliputra, in Act III Chandragupta bemoans that he ever brought Dhruvadevi there to face such misery. Prasad, also a votary of women's equality, uses the fact of homage to deepen Dhruvadevi's hurt. His play seems a feminist outcry against injustice and inequality of women in Indian society.

In the *DSD* there are several references to established historical facts, as opposed to 'probable' history, which are used with dramatic insight. Samudragupta's horse-sacrifice is mentioned mainly to underline the emperor's prowess, but in Act III Munshi displays dramatic dexterity by using the image of Samudragupta's horses simultaneously to indicate the futility of the sacrifice and portray Chandragupta's insanity. The implication of the contrast between Samudragupta's glory and Ramagupta's ignominy is well brought out through the image of the crying horses. Another historical reference is to Samudragupta's gracious treatment meted out to defeated kings, as described by Undan and Harisena in Act III. Dattadevi's participation in her husband's heroic deeds, alternately praised by Chandragupta and criticized by Ramagupta, has the backing of numismatic evidence.[17] Other such evidence used by Munshi is a reference to Chandragupta's skill at lion-slaying.[18] Madhavi extols Chandragupta as a valiant lion slayer and thus tries to create a positive image of the prince in the mind of Dhruvadevi (Act I). Munshi uses historical details for the dramatic purpose of character portrayal, and not merely to add historical coloring as he is accused of doing in his historical romances.

Rudrasena, the Shaka king in the *DSD*, seems to be Rudrasinha III[19] who was defeated between 388-398 A.D. by Chandra-

[17] Basham, p. 381.
[18] Mookerji, p. 45.
[19] Rudradaman of the *DSD* is Rudrasena II of history. See Majumdar and Altekar, pp. 47-63.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

gupta II. This defeat marked the annexation of Surashtra to the Gupta Empire,[20] and also ended the domination of the foreign rulers "who (had) occupied the soil of India for the longest period."[21] Munshi, writing the *DSD* in pre-independent India (1929), would find this conflict significant; so he uses it by shifting the time a little. Chandragupta in the *DSD* is not yet a crowned king when he wins Surashtra. The dramatic impact of his success enhances as Munshi makes Chandragupta win Surashtra for his lady love, when he is supposedly mad (Act IV).

Kalidasa has been commonly accepted to have flourished at the court of Chandragupta II. The *DSD* presents the poet and the prince as childhood friends, which has no historical or legendary basis. Munshi uses Kalidasa, the young lover, primarily in the service of Cupid. His participation in political or military affairs, however little, is a result of Munshi's imagination. There is one historical reference of uncertain authenticity that Chandragupta II sent Kalidasa as an ambassador to the court of a Kuntala king.[22] Munshi makes his Kalidasa refer to only one diplomatic detail in the entire play. He tells Dhruvadevi about a Kuntaleshvara's gifts received in the Court (Act I). Elsewhere Kalidasa's dialogues refer mainly to love and poetry, or constitute a poetic commentary on political and cultural trends.

The poet known to posterity is evident in his dialogues suffused with similes. The recitation of verses from his composition the *Kumarasambhavam* increases historical credibility of the character and intensifies the emotion of love, which is central to Act IV. Though the dates of Kalidasa's life and works are speculative,[23] Munshi accepts the theory that Kalidasa lived at least for sixty years, as indicated in the *dramatis personae* of the play. In this character Munshi dramatizes his fascination for India's literary heritage.

Probably charmed by the Guptas' faith in *dharma* as the basis for their kingdom, Munshi includes Yajnavalkya as a character in the play. The speculative dates of Yajnavalkya vary between the first and fourth centuries A.D.[24] Munshi

[20] Majumdar and Altekar, pp. 61-63.
[21] Ibid., p. 168.
[22] Ibid., p. 170 fn.
[23] K. Krishnamurthy in *Kalidasa* gives a chart of speculative dates of Kalidasa's works. (New York: Twayne publishers, 1972), pp. 10, 15-16.
[24] Majumdar, *HCIP* II, 257.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

accepts the later date and makes Yajnavalkya contemporary with Samudragupta. Yajnavalkya, ideologically, symbolizes the wisdom and strength of Aryan culture. Munshi's Yajnavalkya blesses the unconventional marriage of Chandragupta and Dhruvadevi on the strength of his own and other scriptures. Historical records do not suggest that the *Yajnavalkya Smriti* supported such marriages. There is only one reference in this *Smriti* (I-68.69) that does not condemn the system of levirate mentioned in the *Mahabharata*.[25] The basis is thin, but Munshi uses it. R. C. Majumdar records Narada and Parashara permitting such marriages.[26] Kautilya permits widow-remarriage on five different grounds.[27] Though such marriages were permitted, the Sangli and Cambay plates condemn the act and even describe it as "illicit intercourse."[28] A paradox between shastric injunction and people's reaction provides a parallel to a contemporary issue of widow-remarriage in Munshi's time. It was a favorite issue for many a nationalist reformist. For Munshi, it became a personal issue as well. It seemingly rationalizes his own marriage in this play.

That the Guptas were illustrious Bhagavatas and the Shakas were Shaivites are historical facts.[29] Munshi makes his Gupta *Kshatriyas* refer to Vishnu by varied epithets; Undan alludes to Rudradaman as a great worshipper of Shiva (Act II). Vasubandhu, an eminent Buddhist monk, is recorded to have had relations with the Guptas. Majumdar says that Emperor Samudragupta entrusted "his son's" education to Vasubandhu,[30] without indicating the name of the son. Vamana, however, records Vasubandhu's time before 350 A.D., which would falsify the previous contention. Paramartha's biography refers to Vasubandhu's association with a Vikramaditya.[31] Once again from this confusing data, Munshi uses an uncertain date that helps him recreate his favorite theme of religious tolerance among the Bhagavatas, Shaivites and Buddhists. Religious tolerance and harmony in the Gupta period is also a part of history,[32] and not a figment of Munshi's imagi-

[25] Majumdar, *HCIP* II, p. 567.
[26] Majumdar and Altekar, p. 351.
[27] Majumdar, *HCIP* II, p. 565.
[28] Majumdar and Altekar, p. 163.
[29] Ibid., p. 379.
[30] Ibid., p. 366.
[31] Ibid., pp. 155-156.
[32] Ibid., pp. 364-368.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

nation. The perpetuation of religious tolerance in contemporary India to attain cultural unity was one of the nationalist themes for Indians, and the favorite of Munshi (*Akhand Hindustan* and *Krishnavatara*).

The historical atmosphere in the *DSD* is enhanced by the terms of address and of greeting, and descriptions of costumes. *Deva* for Ramagupta, *Mahadevi* for Dhruvadevi, *Maharaj* for Chandragupta, *Bhagavati* for Dattadevi, *Acharyadeva* for Yajnavalkya, have been used as equivalent proper nouns. The terms referring to political, military and administrative offices add to the historical coloration. *Sandhivigrahika,* 'Minister for War and Peace' or 'Foreign Minister,' *Kumaramatya,* 'Minister for the Prince' and *Mantri,* 'Minister' are used by Munshi with the same meaning as in the Gupta age. In the same way Munshi uses the following Guptan terms indicating military hierarchy: *Mahadandanayaka,* 'Commander General,' *Dandanayaka,* 'Commander,' *Senapati,* 'Captain.'[33]

Munshi seems to adhere to historical evidences while giving details of dress. The cotton *dhoti* with an upper garment was a common dress for men of the Gupta period; royalty and upper classes wore the silk *dhoti,* Ramagupta wears the silk *dhoti* (Act I), Kalidasa wears the cotton *dhoti* (Act I). The Scythians had introduced coats and trousers which were adopted by the Gupta Emperors. This is evident in Chandragupta's dress as described in Munshi's stage direction (Act I). Both Ramagupta and Chandragupta wear head-dresses befitting that period.[34] Women wore a sari over petticoat and bodice to cover their breasts, as described by Munshi in Shashilekha's description (Act I). Munshi does not mention jewellery in any of his stage directions, which was quite popular among both men and women.[35] Chandragupta, however, has been shown removing his earrings and necklace to give away to the ascetic —*shrotriya* (Act I). Munshi does not describe the dresses of each character, but gives details of the representative character as they appear on stage for the first time. Thus there are detailed descriptions of the dress of Kalidasa, Shashilekha, Chandragupta, Dattadevi, Ramagupta and Rudrasena. From these the dresses of other characters in similar categories have to be

[33] Majumdar and Altekar, pp. 277-278.
[34] Ibid., p. 353.
[35] Ibid., p. 354.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

visualized.

The action takes place in Ujjayini and Kusumpur, another name for Pataliputra. Historical records mention Pushpapura, as a variant for Pataliputra;[36] Munshi uses a synonym for *pushpa, kusum,* in the choice of the name Kusumpur.

Munshi has been criticized for sacrificing the psychological relatedness of his characters and their time, and creating a semblance of history. Although that may be true of some of his historical romances, the *DSD* artistically mingles the fourth century milieu and values with Munshi's twentieth-century ideology.

Plot Structure:

Munshi concentrates on relevant details for a well-knit plot structure in Act I. The focal point of the play being the gradual resurgence of love between Chandragupta and Dhruvadevi, Act I appropriately opens with a love scene between Kalidasa and Madhavi. Their dialogue, consisting of a youthful, silly squabble of lovers, conveys, some important details regarding the central characters, Chandragupta, Dhruvadevi and Ramagupta.

A good exposition in a play should be clear, natural, important, interesting to hold attention, and swift in communication. Kalidasa's talk with Madhavi reveals Munshi's ability to economize on details and relate them swiftly. We learn that Dhruvadevi's former sparkle has dimmed because of her unhappy marriage; that Chandragupta has come home after two years on the battlefield, and that both Chandragupta and Ramagupta are going to visit Dhruvadevi on the same day though for different purposes. The scene is set for the ensuing conflict between the two brothers who individually symbolize heroism and cowardice.

The technique of swift narration helped Munshi in developing plots of his novels too. In the *DSD,* however, Munshi is not able to retain the law of dramatic economy after Act I; it weakens as the play progresses. The conversation between Kalidasa and Madhavi in Act I, structurally resembles the conventional opening of a Sanskrit play in which the stage-director, *sutradhara,* starts with a benediction, usually to Lord

[36] Majumdar and Altekar, p. 140.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Shiva. Then he holds a conversation with an actress about the main action and characters of the play.[37] Munshi's Kalidasa remembers Shiva and Parvati along with the god of love, Kamadeva, as he good-heartedly comments on love-stricken Shashilekha and her indifference to the rest of the world. Kalidasa says, "Incited by him (Kamdeva), two individuals like Shiva and Parvati may climb the Kailasa and may not care to cast a sympathetic glance on the rest of the world" (Act I). Munshi shows a subtle sense of unity of plot, in the Western literary criterion, when he evokes the same sentiment in the words of Chandragupta and Dhruvadevi in Act IV. Chandragupta and Dhruvadevi at the climactic moment of their expression of love, also desire to be shut-off from the outside world without caring to look at it (Act IV). Munshi thus modifies the earlier usage of the *sutradhara,* providing a dramatic exposition to the play. His preoccupation with experimentation, recasting the old into the new molds, is interesting and noteworthy.

Munshi's success in accomplishing an effective exposition in Act I is closely related to his art as a story teller. Munshi shows his ability to highlight the antithesis between Ramagupta and Chandragupta by a judicious selection of details from the clutter of raw material at his disposal. The valor of Chandragupta conflicts with Ramagupta's voluptuousness. Chandragupta is committed to protect the glory of his father's land which is technically Ramagupta's. Ironically, Ramagupta is committed to pleasures and has no time even to confer with Chandragupta regarding the protection of the kingdom. *Dharma* is Chandragupta's ideal, passion for pleasure is Ramagupta's. The contrast is concretized by yet another episode. A Brahmin is turned away by Ramagupta, but he receives *gurudakshina* from Chandragupta. Parakramadeva's memory spurs Chandragupta on to new ventures, it sickens Ramagupta. Dattadevi admires and is proud of Chandragupta, but she regrets that she ever gave birth to Ramagupta. Dhruvadevi's repulsion for Ramagupta and attraction for Chandragupta constitutes dramatic conflict. This is well brought out by Munshi through the choice of apt situations, meaningful short dialogues, and clever manipulation of entries and exits

[37] J. A. B. Van Buitenan, *Two Plays of Ancient India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 29.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

of characters.

The conversation of Kalidasa and Madhavi is interrupted by the entry of Dhruvadevi, the subject of the talk, who quietly enters from one side of the palace and goes into the garden. Her appearance substantiates Madhavi's description of her, which has prepared the audience/reader before she enters the stage. Munshi uses this dramatic device common to Greek and Sanskrit playwrights. Kalidasa and Madhavi, like the Greek Chorus — the role they again play in Act II — comment on the contrast between Dhruvadevi's past and present for the benefit of the audience/reader. Once dignified and lustrous, Dhruvadevi appears on the stage, now dejected and forlorn, but still proud as Shashilekha runs in to report to Madhavi the insult to an ascetic Brahmin in the palace of Ramagupta. Dhruvadevi sends for the Brahmin so that he may be properly honored. Later in the Act, the entry of the Brahmin is used by Munshi to heighten the contrast between two brothers' attitude toward a Brahmin. One disrespects the greedy ritualism of Brahmins, the other respects them as the repositories of good fortune.

The talk of Madhavi and Kalidasa with Dhruvadevi about heroic Chandragupta prepares the reader for the first encounter between the main characters. The contrast between extrovert Chandragupta and withdrawn Dhruvadevi generates another dramatic situation. Chandragupta is assertive, full of family pride and eager to influence Dhruvadevi to bring pressure on Ramagupta. Dhruvadevi is quiet, has lost interest in the past glories of the family and has no desire to relate to her husband. But she is too proud to let Chandragupta penetrate her armor of dignity. Her exterior is ruffled by none. Munshi deliberately emphasizes her initial coldness and withdrawal to deepen the impact of her subsequent warm and aggressive love in Act IV.

Ramagupta enters when the reader has fully understood the two central characters. Munshi uses a different dramatic device to introduce Ramagupta. The reader does not know anything about Ramagupta's nature before his entry as he does about Dhruvadevi and Chandragupta. The stage direction depicts him as intoxicated, red-eyed, staggering in gait, and chewing pan. These details reveal him as a pleasure-loving man. Ramagupta substantiates this impression by his speech. Soon after his entry he quips: "We do not allow any intrusion in

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

our pleasure." "The Bhagavatas were earth's conquerors, now they are its ravishers." Though respectful to his mother, Dattadevi, he obeys nobody but himself. He can be shamelessly insolent to his mother. When Dattadevi regrets that she ever gave birth to Ramagupta, he retorts, "Well, done can't be undone." All his qualities are revealed to the reader through his acting and dialogues, indicating Munshi's skill in *dramatic* characterization.

The antithesis between the characters of the two brothers is utilized by Munshi to effect a change in Dhruvadevi's personality. Fascinated by Chandragupta's generosity and his selfless sense of commitment, Dhruvadevi is ready to go to the battlefield. She steps out of her shell. The depiction of a change in Dhruvadevi serves two purposes for the writer. It provides a basis for furtherance of the plot and the blooming of love between Chandragupta and Dhruvadevi. It also underlines one of Munshi's favorite themes: women's individuality and their equality with men.

One weak link in the plot in Act I is the second entry of Kalidasa and Madhavi. Munshi considers it appropriate to let them leave the stage when Chandragupta tries to persuade Dhruvadevi to share her feelings with him. It is a private conversation. However, Madhavi and Kalidasa re-enter with the group that follows Ramagupta. In the entire scene thereafter, Madhavi does not say or do anything. Kalidasa also utters only one sentence, a characteristic simile.

Munshi uses the language that is consistent with the character. Chandragupta's idealism expressed in conventional, patterned language is congruous with his heroic personality. On the other hand Ramagupta's language is mundane. His antiromantic attitude to glory, indifference to family pride, and lack of filial feelings are reflected in his casual words and phrases.[38]

Act II, while continuing to concentrate on swift action, clear characterization and portrayal of dramatic conflict, reveals a different technique in the arrangement of episodes.

The negotiations of the treaty between Rudrasena and Ramagupta are enlivened by the idiosyncratic mannerism of the

[38] Allardyce Nicoll distinguishes between 'patterned language' and 'ordinary speech.' *The Theatre and Dramatic Theory* (London: George G. Harrap & Co., Ltd., 1962), p. 145.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

former and care-free behaviour of the latter. Though defeated, Ramagupta shows his characteristic ego by his insulting remarks about Rudrasena. In contrast Harisena's diplomatic politeness, Undan's resentful reserve, and Chandragupta's aggressive challenge create variety in modes of verbal expression and gesticulation.

The antitheses between the victorious and the defeated kings, and between the two brothers, with Dhruvadevi in the center, are well sustained by Munshi. The farther Dhruvadevi is thrown from Ramagupta, by his shameless acceptance of Rudrasena's proposal, the closer she comes to Chandragupta. Before the end of Act II, her anxiety and concern for Chandragupta, her eagerness to meet with him while Guhasena is after her, ready to kidnap her, establishes her as Chandragupta's confirmed beloved. When Chandragupta falls unconscious on the ground, out of frustration at not finding Dhruvadevi, it is obvious that his heroism was not solely motivated by family pride. His pious anger against Ramagupta's atrocity has its partial basis in his unconscious love for Dhruvadevi.

Munshi's use of dialogue in this Act is inconsistent. In the earlier part of the Act, the dialogues are well balanced, but those after Rudrasena's exit are weak. Undan's narration of Rudrasena's demands and regrets at Ramagupta's compliance are repetitious. More monotonous are Undan's repeated lamentations about the present ignominy and the lost glory of the Guptas. But the episodes are arranged with dramatic insight and dexterity.

There is a confluence of humor, pathos, and antiromanticism in Ramagupta's reaction to the victory cry for Parakramadeva which he hears from a distance. He is drunk and laughs at the foolishness of his people. His utter disrespect for his father's glory once again is evident when he says, "Some bother you while alive, others bother you after they are dead, Parakramadeva bothers you alive or dead." He sees Dhruvadevi who he thought was already in Rudrasena's camp. Being an unscrupulous, possessive husband, he orders that Dhruvadevi should go to Kusumpur with him. The scene reveals Ramagupta's debauchery and jealousy in action, and contributes to the furtherance of the plot.

Except indicating the passage of time, Kalidasa and Madhavi hardly fulfil any role in the plot structure in this Act.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Once again, Kalidasa is like Enobarbus in Shakespeare's *Anthony and Cleopatra,* who as the detached Chorus makes an observation on the passing scene and on the major characters involved in it. Munshi makes Kalidasa and Madhavi witness the anxiety and the agony of the lovers, Dhruvadevi and Chandragupta. The two love-birds, as Chandragupta names them in Act I, continue to play their roles in the honor of Kamadeva (Cupid) in Act III.

In this Act Munshi manipulates time. He accomplishes the transition from Rudrasena's victory to his fall in one Act. This needs sufficient time lapse. He does not revert to the older tradition of a change of scenes; instead, he uses the modern method of compressing several scenes into one. The stage directions indicate that the "Action stops" or "A few hours seem to pass." There are, however, some discrepancies in the indication of time. This Act opens "Two or three *praharas* after noon," which would mean 6.00 p.m., a *prahara* being three hours (see fn 1, Act I). Rudrasena insists on Dhruvadevi's arrival in his camp "Before sun-set," allowing "three hours." This is possible only if Munshi used a *prahara* to mean one hour. This is an obvious deviation from the dictionary meaning of the term *prahara.*

The plot in Act III pivots around Chandragupta's insanity, offering great scope to a talented actor. Munshi relates Chandragupta's madness with Parakramadeva's crying horses, revealing dramatic talent and imagination. Historically, the image of the horses is meaningful by its relevance to Parakramadeva's horse-sacrifice. Ramagupta's behavior has destroyed the glory symbolized by the horse-sacrifice, so the horses cry. Their tears rise in floods and sweep away everybody, says Chandragupta. His apparent madness, like that of Shakespeare's fools, has wisdom in it. Dattadevi even says, "There is wisdom in his mad words." Chandragupta's pretense is not known to the reader/audience. The revelation comes as a surprise both to Dhruvadevi and the reader/audience simultaneously.

Munshi also uses Chandragupta's madness to imaginatively enact the scenes that took place off-stage. Chandragupta refers to Ramagupta as Rudrasena and reenacts his wrath against the Shaka king to save the honor of Dhruvadevi. He also gives vent to his pious rage against Ramagupta's dishonorable act,

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

and indirectly shows his love for Dhruvadevi. Munshi depicts Chandragupta not merely as an enraged lover, but also as a champion protector of women's honor. When Ramagupta pinches Madhavi, the Brahmin girl, on the cheek, Chandragupta jumps on him and throws him out; providing a prelude to his subsequent encounter when he kills Ramagupta. Chandragupta's madness saves him in the estimation of other characters, though not of the reader/audience, from all ignominy of regicide and fratricide. As Munshi wills it, killing Ramagupta, the symbol of evil, is an "act of merit." Munshi's handling of the sentimental dialogues between Chandragupta and Dhruvadevi is not very effective; they are emotional, but tend to be superficial and repetitious. The scene between them, however, is important for they confess their love for the first time. Their frustrations and agonies sound more like the sentimental love of teenagers than of dignified adults.

Throughout the play, Munshi seems to portray the inner self in the depiction of love for which he heavily draws from his own love affair.[39] Munshi has been, in fact, criticized for not portraying the inner complexities of characters in his works. Suresh Joshi accuses Munshi of violating the detachment of an artist and sliding into self-love, *atmarati*.[40] Although this is true, it is interesting to note that Bhoja in the *Shringaraprakash* considers *atmarati* as the all-pervading emotion of all *rasas*. Munshi's *atmarati* fares better in the less inhibitive expression of heroism and statesmanship than love.

Munshi, the statesman, handles political intrigues well by vividly depicting the individual's moves and motives. This is evident in all his earliest to the latest works.[41] A dead king, a mad prince, the queen mother, the young widowed queen, and shrewd ministers provide perfect material for a Munshi play. The writer effectively reveals Harisena's statesmanship, Vatsya's cunning, Dattadevi's sagacity, and Dhruvadevi's confusion. Mad Chandragupta's clever suggestion of bringing the dead, brave Kumaradevi as the queen is intelligently interpre-

[39] Some of the dialogues between Chandragupta and Dhruvadevi in Act IV, relating their desire to die together and pain born of the conflict between duty and moral code echo Munshi's agony as portrayed in the *SSS*, pp. 140, 236.

[40] *Granth*, p. 33.

[41] *SV* and *KA* testify this contention. The best scenes in the *KA* depict Krishna as a statesman. Munshi's genius flourishes at its best in the delineation of diplomacy/statesmanship.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

ted by Harisena, and he suggests that Dhruvadevi should wield the sceptre.

There are no historical records of Dhruvadevi having ever administered her country.[42] But being Munshi's heroine, she gets an opportunity to show her potential as an equal of man. Elders, spiritual preceptor and able statesman, all confirm the suggestion of an insane man. Once again, Munshi displays dramatic insight in depicting this scene. Confused by the prospect of the unexpected responsibility, Dhruvadevi looks at Chandragupta for help. Mad Chandragupta says to the imaginary horse, "My dear great horse, shall I whisper secretly in your ear? Be patient, my dear, be patient." The myth of madness is extended to a significant dialogue between the two lovers.

Kalidasa's role in this Act is superficial. He assigns Madhavi to bring Dhruvadevi to the *ashrama* to meet with Chandragupta. It seems a useless errand, since everybody else who comes there, arrives uncalled. Again, while Kalidasa keeps watch Chandragupta and Dhruvadevi confess their love for the first time, the watchman fails; Ramagupta intrudes anyway. Kalidasa is throughout very visible, but is not heard nor does he do anything meaningful. He does not offer even his characteristic simile in this scene. This Act is cluttered with exits and entries and does not attain the organic unity of the First Act.

Munshi conceptualizes the ideal of a good administrator in Yajnavalkya's advice to Dhruvadevi, underlining one of his favorite themes. In his personal life, later as a statesman, Munshi formulated policies on similar broad tenets of cultural preservation and regeneration.

The development of the plot through the interaction of characters is minimal in Act IV. Munshi uses the Sanskrit dramatic method of the creation of the mood of love and blends it with the Western concept of plot structure, ultimately only creating a melodrama in this Act.

Kalidasa now becomes the integral part of the 'main action,' the creation of the sentiment of love—*shringara*. He presides over the silent drama of love between Chandragupta and Dhruvadevi, reciting verses, relevant to the lovers' disposition, from his recent composition *Kumarasambhavam*. Munshi

[42] Majumdar and Altekar, p. 272.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

creates *shringara,* not by the predominant sentiment of *rati,* but by the real Rati, Kamadeva's wife. Rati's lamentations at the death of her lord, Kamadeva, and Parvati's craving for Shiva are evocative of compatible feelings in Chandragupta and Dhruvadevi. This dramatic device gives momentum to the lovers' emotions and prepares the basis for their subsequent expression of agonizing conflict between love and duty. Munshi's sense of dramatic economy creates an effective mode of vicarious expression of love. Kalidasa's verses also would satisfy the literary taste of Munshi's audience that comprised the educated middle class society of Bombay and Gujarat.[43]

Kalidasa's role in this Act seems most relevant to the play. As a friend he is privileged to share the prince's personal feelings, playing a role similar to that of a *Vidushaka* as the *Nayaka's* friend in a Sanskrit drama. As a poet he elucidates the central theme of the play, love. In this Act outward action is replaced by inner feelings. External conflict, political strife, remains peripheral, comprising pushing and shaking of the palace gates and the clamor beyond. The agony of Chandragupta and Dhruvadevi, born out of their conflict and their desire to escape from the world, emerges from Munshi's own experience. This scene also depicts Dhruvadevi as more aggressive, initiating physical closeness and addressing Chandragupta as *"Swami"* (husband). Dhruvadevi's character has not remained static; her bold aggressiveness in Act IV is a big step forward from her proud reticence in Act I.

The interaction of story, dialogue and rousing of emotions in a drama, is dependent on dramatic talk which causes changes in the situation, not that which philosophizes or analyses feelings or indulges in reminiscences. A partial burden of the dialogues is carried by Kalidasa's verses. In this Act Munshi often seems at a loss; there are several stage directions, such as, "They both remain quiet for a while." At one point Dhruvadevi even yawns only to elicit Chandragupta's question, "Are you sleepy?" Aside from some sporadic effusions of inner turmoil, the texture of the dialogue remains fragile, leaving the reader/audience dissatisfied. Ironically, Munshi's otherwise strong command over dialogue remains weak in this climactic scene.

The aggressiveness of Dhruvadevi grows out of the com-

[43] *Munshi,* p. 487.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

bined impact of her agony and the revival of her previous assertive self. Chandragupta's efforts at self-control indicate Munshi's desire to keep his heroic image intact. How could an idealist protagonist of Munshi succumb to a socially and morally undesirable love relationship? To accomplish the projected end of glorification of the objectionable marriage, Munshi manipulates the action sacrificing its artistic unity. Subsequent happenings in the Act are quick, too sudden and defy laws of dramatic necessity and probability.

When the palace is on the verge of collapse and Chandragupta is preoccupied with the idea of making his next move, inspired by the single word *"swami,"* he is possessed by the romantic idea of instant marriage. It is true that he is imaginative, as evident in his disguise and pretended insanity in Acts II and III, but this suggestion defies credibility. The marriage of Munshi's protagonist, the projection of Munshi's own self in many ways, has to be blessed by the guru. Hence Yajnavalkya enters and right away blesses Chandragupta and Dhruvadevi. Between the furtherance of a favorite theme and norms of artistic unity, the former is more important to Munshi.

Munshi's personal ability to gauge a situation quickly and turn it to his advantage in real life was the key to his success. A close perusal of his life and works leads one to this conclusion. At its best, this ability helped Munshi translate his vision into concretized educational and cultural institutions or works of art. At its worst, it reflected Munshi as an opportunist. Chandragupta reveals a similar quality of opportunism at the end of Act IV. Confident of the impact of his charisma, he throws away his weapons and dares Skandagupta and Daman, and taunts Vatsya. He wooes his citizens by addressing them as heroes and impresses them with the story of his victory over Surashtra. The citizens all too readily accept the one-time 'destroyer of the family,' Dhruvadevi, as their queen.

Munshi's weakness as the dramatist in Act IV is characteristic of his art. He set out to portray his favorite theme; his ultimate goal was not artistic perfection. For this portrayal he manages quick action, catchy dialogues and creates an imposing heroic protagonist. Sensational episodes and sentimental heroism will always be a success on the stage. The *DSD,* despite Munshi's romantic extravaganza in Act IV, has

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

remained a successful stage play.[44] It must be remembered that Munshi revolutionized Gujarati drama by introducing stageable plays of literary value. The *DSD* is considered by many as the best of Munshi's stageable plays.[45]

The driving force of Munshi's work is not Munshi the artist, but Munshi the man; the artist in him as in all his literary writings, is merely a vehicle of the man. Since the twin forces controlling Munshi are love and power, out of the inherent contradiction of the surrender of love and assertion of power emerges the dramatic possibility of conflict. Ibsen's personality also revealed similar contradictory impulses of nature: intense ambition and yearning for love. But he never could reconcile the two. Out of that conflict arose Ibsen's vision of the tragic. Munshi's ability to harmonize the forces of love and power deprived the artist in him of the intensity of the tragic vision. As a result, Munshi produced works that merely reveal conflicting ideologies; one is aware of the dramatic possibilities, but does not witness their ultimate strife reflecting a cosmic struggle. The man supersedes the artist; Munshi's harmonized self and his strong convictions ultimately set the tone of his works. Probably for this reason, Munshi did not write tragedies and often failed in the portrayal of *karuna,* the pathetic. He lacked objectivity to attain artistic excellence. His optimism and faith in the joys of life determined the ultimate vision portrayed in his literary works.

About the delineation of the tragic in Munshi's plays, V. R. Trivedi says, "In the plays with *puranic* or historical themes he comes quite near to true tragedy, but his forte is in romance and the comic treatment. There is a tragic compulsion in the *TAR,* which does not, however, attain the full stature of a tragedy, and a pathetic irony in the *DSD*—a dark comedy."[46] However, there prevails an ambivalence about the concept of dark comedy, or tragicomedy. It has been described as a play with tragic propensity that ends happily, or as a play that combines

[44] Dhirubhai Thaker, "Structure and stageability of this play represent a brilliant specimen of dramatic art. " p. 212.

[45] Anantrai Raval, *Sahitya Vihar* 'Journey to Literature,' p. 66., C.H. Gandhi *Sahityakar Munshi* 'Litterateur Munshi,' p. 109. They both consider the *DSD* as Munshi's best play.

[46] V.R. Trivedi, "Outstanding Gujarati Litterateur" in *Munshi at Seventy-Five,* p. 127.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

tragedy and comedy.[47]

The *DSD* has a contrived happy end, though in Acts III and IV it comes close to pathetic irony and tragedy respectively. In Act III, Dhruvadevi finds reciprocation of her love in Chandragupta but she loses him once more as the latter volunteers to go to war. If Chandragupta had lived in Pataliputra to get married to Dhruvadevi, it would have left an inerasible blot of ignominy on his character in the estimation of his people. He would have been branded as a conspirator who killed his brother to marry his wife and become a king. Munshi therefore sends him away to perform one more heroic deed that was probably the brightest feather in the cap of the historical Chandragupta II.[48] Act IV portrays the pangs of separation and inability to find fulfilment in love as death looms over Chandragupta and Dhruvadevi. Finally though, in a characteristic tragicomic vein, 'all's well that ends well.'

Characters:

In the *DSD,* after reaching a near-tragic situation, Munshi's characters triumph in love. They acquire both love and power, as Munshi wants them to. Dhruvadevi's growth as a lover, from a withdrawn woman to an assertive beloved, is dramatically convincing. But in her characterization as an independent woman, commanding queen, and lustrous 'new' woman, Munshi promises more than he accomplishes. We are told about these qualities, but we hardly witness her functioning as a commanding queen. Ironically, a possible exception is Act I. Here, her independent nature operates in two different ways, by alienation and by involvement. Instead of surrendering to her incompatible husband, unlike most women in Munshi's age as well as in present-day India, she asserts herself by alienating herself from him. At the end of Act I, she volunteers an involvement in performing her husband's duty by going to the battlefield. This positive determination as an independent woman we see for the first and last time in the play. After that she is the beloved first, the queen next, or more accurately, only the beloved and the queen only in name.

[47] A. R. Thompson, *The Anatomy of Drama* (New York : Books Libraries Press, Inc., 1946), p. 89.

[48] The reference is to the Shakas' final defeat in Surashtra between 388-398 A.D.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Chandragupta's heroism has its roots in his recognition of *svadharma.* Munshi elaborates this aspect of Chandragupta's character throughout the play. His *svadharma* dwells in the expansion and projection of *dharmarajya,* according to the norms set by Yajnavalkya. Constant recitation of his father's glory and Yajnavalkya's teachings, even in his pretended madness, makes Munshi's emphasis quite evident. Overpowered by these ideals, he is unable to resolve his personal problem of love. The only possible way out for him is renunciation of the world. Dhruvadevi tries to talk him out of the proposed unheroic move. She is aided in her attempt only by the sudden news of a fresh attack of the enemy at the end of Act III.

There is unconventionality about Chandragupta's heroism that reflects Munshi's characteristic paradoxical personality. Despite his adherence to conventions and 'right' behavior, he indulges in an unconventional love affair with his brother's wife. He calls 'killing' his brother an 'act of merit' since Ramagupta symbolizes evil. Like Munshi's *svadharma,* Chandragupta's *svadharma* also emerges from his independent spirit and personal interpretations. A comment is already made on similarities between Chandragupta and Munshi in the discussion of the plot. In Chandragupta's character, personal desires (*preya*) and the good of others (*shreya*) integrate. Chandragupta remains the idealized epitome of cultural regeneration and personal idealization for Munshi. Through Dhruvadevi's words, "Today the sun of valor has arisen" referring to Chandragupta's other name Vikramaditya, Munshi establishes him as the invincible protagonist of his own ideology.

The most artistically realized human character is that of Ramagupta, Chandragupta's foil. In Ramagupta, Munshi conceptualizes the reversal of all values that he held dear. For the writer who is preoccupied with the portrayal of his own personal ideologies, such an antagonist would be a challenge. Munshi excels in his portrayal of Ramagupta, establishing the victory of the artist over the man. He utilizes his skill as a lawyer, a keen perception of the opposites.

Ramagupta is a realist. When he says that all girls are the same, Brahmin or otherwise, or that it was immaterial whether Dhruvadevi lived in Surashtra or Kusumpura, he is not being naive. His firm grip on reality helps him deflate romantic idealism. Respect towards calculated self-seeking

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Brahmins and protection of past glory at the cost of life are meaningless to him. Love has no meaning for him, for, according to him, women are for enjoyment. Victory has no glory, defeat has no shame, remaining alive in the pursuit of pleasure is all that he cherishes. The antithesis between Chandragupta's romanticism and Ramagupta's realism, offers a balanced view of some of Munshi's favorite concepts.

But the realist Ramagupta has a romantic aspect, his lust for life. It is restricted by no other human passions, honor, or glory. Feelings of jealousy and affinity for possessions do not modify his passion for life. The necessity to give away his wife does not rouse any of the basic human reactions in him. He asks Rudrasena to take her, "enjoy her, if you can." There is an inherent sense of revenge and cheap satisfaction in his remark, since he knows that Dhruvadevi is not easy to handle. In any case, she was of no use to him since she had taken a vow of abstinence. He is only interested in saving his life and hence is prepared to offer his own wife in the bargain. However, Munshi does not imply that Ramagupta is incapable of jealousy. He is jealous of Chandragupta, so he gets Dhruvadevi carried away, and later attempts to get Chandragupta killed. Juxtaposed with the obsession for survival, jealousy is secondary.

Minor characters are drawn with great care for details. Rudrasena's speech, dress, manner, reveal his Shaka identity. His satisfaction at having avenged the Guptas after several defeats is exhibited by his repeated pronouncements of his victory. Ramagupta's quipping on Rudrasena's repetitions at once emphasizes Rudrasena's exuberance and Ramagupta's superiority throughout Act II. They both are realists, but the difference is that Rudrasena is a valiant warrior, Ramagupta is a coward. Rudrasena's surrender to physical charm is subtly indicated by the author when Rudrasena is shown staring at Dhruvadevi, overawed by her beauty. He forgets to close his open mouth and keeps staring at her. Confused, he wrongly repeats the terms of the treaty. Soon, however, he controls himself, evaluates the situation realistically, and asks for Dhruvadevi in lieu of the earlier greedy demand. Evidently Munshi succeeds in portraying aggressive men. Rudrasena's pride as a victorious king is well depicted in his insolent remarks. His uncompromising attitude after demanding Dhruvadevi invites

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

his doom, as is gathered from Chandragupta's decisive look. Both realists, Ramagupta and Rudrasena antithetize Chandragupta's heroism with their calculated coolness. But Chandragupta's romanticism gives him greater strength to grasp reality.

Kalidasa embodies Munshi's fascination for India's literary heritage. Munshi, who digs 'the past to salvage' any valuable particle, would understandably introduce Kalidasa in a play about the love involvement of his patron friend Chandragupta. Munshi depicts them as childhood friends, thus facilitating his indulgence in Chandragupta's love affair; and bringing him closer to the traditional role of the *Vidushaka* as the hero's confidant. Kalidasa's character appeals to the reader in a very special way. The known literary figure is utilized in a totally unknown role of a fashionable young lover and a go-between. He writes poetry but participates in a battle too, though he is mightier with the pen than the sword. He consistently uses poetic language replete with similes.

There is no incongruity in the characterization of Kalidasa, but Munshi's efforts to integrate him with the plot meet with only partial success. As discussed above, Kalidasa remains peripheral to the plot like the Sutradhara of Sanskrit drama or the Greek Chorus, in Acts I, II, and III. In Act IV, his character successfully blends with the theme and the sentiment (*rasa*) of love. Munshi's attempt to blend different models from the dramas of the East and the West is remarkable.

Dattadevi represents the mother, torn between natural affection and displeasure toward her son Ramagupta. Historically Samudragupta had probably appointed Chandragupta as his successor.[49] Dattadevi and Yajnavalkya, according to Undan, were instrumental in making Ramagupta the king (Act II). Dattadevi accepts Yajnavalkya's rationale that the kingdom has remained unified because Ramagupta, though weak, is still a king (Act III). Her love for Chandragupta is immense, but her partiality for her older son Ramagupta is natural. Caught between two sons, she looks more a helpless woman than a once heroic and powerful consort of Parakramadeva. Dattadevi is a stereotype of affectionate and ever-forgiving motherhood one finds in Munshi's works. The source of such portrayal is Munshi's own mother. Like all mothers, Datta-

[49] Majumdar and Altekar, p. 158.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

devi is partial toward her own sons. She is upset at the suggestion of Vatsya that her husband's son Skandagupta — by another queen—be considered for the throne after Ramagupta is killed.

Yajnavalkya epitomizes Munshi's pride for Brahminhood and ancient cultural values. He is the driving force behind the *dharmarajya,* but also blesses an unconventional marriage and offers authority of *dharma* in its support. Yajnavalkya's characterization is weak. His casual words and ideas are not suggestive of his greatness. His advice to Dhruvadevi on how to run the kingdom is trivial. The instant formula of *Rajaniti* he offers to her (Act III) is a far cry from the magnanimous act of cultural regeneration that he supposedly had accomplished in conjunction with Samudragupta. Yajnavalkya remains a functional, minor character in the play.

Following the practice of Western dramatists like Shaw and Ibsen, Munshi gives detailed stage directions. Often they contain information that would not be known to the audience, but only to the reader. For example, a reference to Kalidasa's later works, or Harisena's contribution to history, would be appreciated by the reader; the audience is not informed of these details through dialogues. Such treatment also suggests that Munshi wrote plays mainly to be read despite his emphasis on their stageability.

Along with the elimination of division of Acts into scenes, Munshi discards the use of the soliloquy in the *DSD,* unlike in his previous plays. Solitary sentences uttered by Ramagupta (Act II) and Kalidasa (Acts I, IV) addressed to 'himself' are realistic and revelatory of their personal characteristics. The elimination of sub-plots, so popular in the professional theater, enhances the unity of action in the play. The seriousness of the *DSD* is maintained despite the introduction of humor in the light-hearted remarks of Ramagupta and Chandragupta's faked insanity. Whereas Munshi's comic idiom flourished the most in his farces, its careful blending in the *DSD* confirms Munshi's dramatic insight. His characters become memorable and well rounded where Munshi remains detached from them letting them breathe their own life, as in Ramagupta's character. Although Munshi did not reach modern sophistication in the portrayal of inner realities of a character, he brought innovations to Gujarati drama.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

The focal point of the *DSD* is the glorification of the Aryan qualities born out of Munshi's own nature. Chandragupta represents the superhuman personality that was central to Munshi's vision. His search for permanent truth was imbedded in his search for *power* from ancient ideals. But Munshi was not just a dreamer, he was a practical idealist. He infused his ideal into art and entertainment creating the three-faced organic product, in which the last two became means to the first. In dramatic art, the *DSD* reveals a descending graph from Act I to Act IV, but as a stage play it has all the ingredients of a consistently enjoyable work.

It may be of interest to comparatively evaluate Prasad's *Dhruvasvamini* in relation to the *DSD*, especially because Prasad was Munshi's elder contemporary in Hindi literature. Prasad's play dates to 1935, six years after Munshi's play was published, and is more feminist in tone and tighter in structure. The plot structure of Prasad's play, unlike those in his earlier plays, resembles modern, Western literary models. Dhruvadevi is of central interest in Prasad's play, unlike Chandragupta in Munshi's. She is on the stage most of the time, vigorously participating in the action, unlike Munshi's Dhruvadevi who remains a silent observer most of the time. The advocacy of women's equality is emphasized by Prasad's Dhruvadevi more; Munshi's Dhruvadevi is less assertive, even though a ruling queen, compared not only with Prasad's heroine but Munshi's own other heroic female characters, especially Devyani in *PS*.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

CHAPTER VI

Complete translation of 'Dhruvasvaminidevi' from Gujarati

BACKGROUND*

Around 300 A.D. many foreigners had torn apart the land of India. The Andhraites had lost their power along the banks of the Godavari. Konkan, Lat, Saurashtra, Anarta, Rajputana, the Punjab, and the area surrounding the Ganges were ruled by alien kings. All of them were *Abrahmavarchas phalgudastivra manyava*—without the glory of Brahman, worthless, and impetuous arrogants.

All this time, Vishvaphani ruled in Magadha. He conquered many lands and gave them away to be ruled by tribal chiefs. After him, Shrigupta became the king who ruled over Magadha and Saketa. He had a son, Chandragupta, who married Kumardevi, a Lichhavi princess. Chandragupta and Kumardevi are considered a unique couple of ancient India; both the king and the queen seem to rule their kingdom.

* The "Background" is part of Munshi's Gujarati text. He terms it *Bhumika*. All footnotes, except a few of Munshi's which I have translated and indicated as such, are mine. All words in brackets, other than stage directions, in the translation are my additions to clarify the implication of a statement.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Their son, Samudragupta, had coins minted with the engraving of their marriage. Besides calling himself 'the son of Chandragupta,' Samudragupta referred to himself as 'the son of Kumardevi.' Hardly any king in Indian history has shown similar respect for his mother.

Samudragupta acquired unchallenged supremacy over the entire Aryan land north of the Narmada. This king was widely known as *Kritantaparashu,* 'the holder of the battle axe' or 'Yama's axe,' *Ajitarajajetajita,* 'unconquered conqueror of unconquerable kings,' *Sarvarajochheta,* 'destroyer of all kings,' *Vyaghra Parakrama,* 'having the prowess of a tiger,' *Parakramanka,* 'one whose seal is valor.' Vincent Smith calls him the Napoleon of India. He was a powerful creator of the Aryan nation—*Aryavarta.* Not only did he conquer many lands, but he also performed a horse sacrifice and won the title of *Ashvamedha Parakrama,*[1] 'the heroic performer of the horse-sacrifice.'

The preceptor of moral and religious conduct of this time, Yajnavalkya, uttered the eternal maxim: Munificence is the foundation of *dharma.* Samudragupta practised this in his life. Not only did he perform the horse sacrifice, he also consecrated the Indian cultural tradition of patronizing scholars. It is engraved on his coins that he "the unrivalled in war, having conquered the earth also conquers heaven by his magnificent deeds."[2] Besides being a benevolent king, he was a good poet and fond of playing the *vina.* Today one may find gold coins with the engraving of his image playing the *vina.*[3]

Harisena (Harishena), the commander general of Parakra-

[1] "*Ashvamedha,* horse-sacrifice wherein a specially consecrated horse was set free to roam at will for a year, followed by a chosen band of warriors. Chieftains and kings on whose territory the horse wandered were forced to do homage or fight, and if it was not captured by a neighboring king, it was brought back to the capital and sacrificed at the end of the year." Basham, p. 42.

R. K. Mookerji states, "Samudragupta fittingly celebrated his *digvijaya* by performing the horse-sacrifice which had long fallen into desuetude. Therefore his successors hail him as one who 'revived the horse-sacrifice after such a long time.'

The Allahabad inscription is silent about it, but the coins refer to this. One of them portrays "a horse before *yupa* and on Rev. the queen (whose presence was required in the ceremony) and the definite legend *Ashvamedha parakramah*". R. K. Mookerji, p. 30.

[2] The legend on the *Obv.* of Ashvamedha coins reads : *Rajadhirajaha prithvimavitva divam jayati aparativaryaviryaha* 'the king of kings having conquered the earth now conquers heaven with invincible valor.' Mookerji, p. 30.

[3] Found on the 'lyrist type' coin. The *Obv.* shows "King seated, nimbate, crosslegged, wearing waist cloth, close-fitting cap, necklace, earings and armlets, on high-backed couch, playing lyre or lute (*vina*) which lies on his knees." Ibid., p. 35.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

maditya's son,[4] composed a eulogy for him. The inscription is to be found in Allahabad.

Aryo hi-tya-upaguhya bhava pishunai rut karnitai
romabhihi,
Sabhyeshu-chhvasiteshu tulyakulajamlanananodvikshitah,
(sne) ha vyalulitena bashpaguruna tatvekshina chakshusha,
yaha pitrabhihito ni(ri) kshya nikhilam pahyeva
(mu)rvimiti.

(He Samudragupta) whose father suffused with delight, seeing his son with loving eyes that perceived truth, saying (he) truly (is) suitable, bade him to protect the world, (and) at that time (he) who was looked at by those born in the same family with faces downcast (with envy); and the members of the court breathed a sigh (of relief).[5]

Some coins represent Dattadevi, this great king's wife, fanning the sacrificial horse. In about 387 A.D. this valorous hero departed for the heaven already conquered by him with his noble deeds. Historians used to believe that his son Chandragupta succeeded him. This king, known by the epithets, *Parama Bhagavata* 'The Best Bhagavata,' *Simha Vikrama* 'The Lion of Heroic Valor,' *Parama Bhattaraka* 'Most Revered,' has won an invincible position as King Vikrama in the hearts of Indians. Many scholars now accept as an established fact that the poet Kalidasa was a friend of the same Vikramaditya.

Dr. Sylvain Levi has recently discovered that Samudragupta's elder son, Ramagupta, held the sceptre of the Guptas for a short period between Samudragupta and Chandragupta. Vishakhadatta, the author of *Mudrarakshasa,* wrote a play called *Devichandraguptam* depicting the character of Ramagupta, his evil deeds, and the circumstance of his death. This play is not extant in its entirety; but history is rebuilt from its fragments.[6]

With the use of other historical evidence and imaginary details, I have attempted to reconstruct this play.

[4] Mookerji glosses *Mahadandanayaka* as 'the chief of the police and criminal judge.' Ibid., 'p. 19. Munshi uses this title to indicate commander general of the army referring to Undan, and in Act IV to Harisena.

[5] The verse refers to Allahabad inscription which states that Samudragupta was selected for the throne by his father who considered him to be fully worthy of it as an Aryan.

[6] Munshi footnotes this : "Dr. Altekar's article in Bihar and Orissa Journal. See Mr. Keshavlal Dhruva's article, Samudragupta no Kramaprapta Uttaradhikari' ((Chronological Successor of Samudragupta) in *Sahitya ane Vivechana* (Literature and Criticism), Vol. 1, pp. 222-245."

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

The Gupta period was the golden age of India. There was a confluence of heroism, splendor and learning in that age. All the three were epitomized in Chandragupta Vikramaditya. Just as in European history, wars were fought for two thousand years to win the title of 'Caesar,' in our history such wars were fought for twelve hundred years to earn the titles *'Vikramaditya,' 'Parama Bhattaraka,' 'Rajadhiraja.'* Comparable to the generic use of the terms 'Caesar,' 'Czar,' and 'Kaiser' for an emperor, are the titles of Chandragupta in our history.

In fact, in the Aryan land, the *Yajnavalkya Smriti* is considered more authoritative than the *Manu Smriti.* If we accept the theory that the *Yajnavalkya Smriti* was composed in the time of Samudragupta by a Brahmin from Mithila, we have sufficient grounds to establish that it was the Gupta dynasty that tried to make the *Smriti* the foundation of their *dharmarajya* (kingdom of righteousness). Moreover, the facts that the author of the *Shakuntala* and the *Meghaduta,* Kalidasa, flourished in this age, and that some *Puranas* and the latest editions of the *Mahabharata* were written during this king's regime, reveal the cultural traits of that period.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Dhruvasvaminidevi

[*A fresh look at a lost play*]

PLACE: Kusumpura and Ujjayini.

TIME: Between 370 and 390 A.D.

CHARACTERS: In order of appearance

Kalidasa: A brahmin youth of about 21; in forty years after the time of this play he is destined to write immortal works like *Raghuvamsha, Meghaduta, Shakuntala,* etc.

Shashilekha: Dhruvadevi's maid and Madhavi's friend.

Madhavi: The damsel, the intensity of love for whom is resuscitated in the *Shakuntala,* and separation from whom is portrayed in the *Meghaduta.*

Dhruvadevi: Mahadevi (the great queen) of Ramagupta, the king of kings, and daughter of Achyutadeva of Aryavarta.

Chandragupta: Parakramadeva Samudragupta's younger son and Ramagupta's younger brother whom we know as king Vikrama — the great man of the legend — as a prince.

Ramagupta: Parakramadeva Samudragupta's eldest son; Chakravarti (Sovereign) of Kusumpura-Pataliputra.

Madhurika: Greek girl in attendance on Ramagupta.

Malika: Greek girl in attendance on Ramagupta.

Dattadevi: Parakramadeva Samudragupta's wife and mother of Ramagupta and Chandragupta.

Undan: Commander General of Parakramadeva and Ramagupta.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Rohal: Ramagupta's chief of cavalry.

Harisena: (originally Harishena) Son of Dhruvabhuti, Commander, Minister of War and Peace, poet, who immortalized Samudragupta by writing his eulogy.

Rudrasena: A foreign king of Surashtra, devotee of Shiva, who demolished the power built by Samudragupta by defeating Ramagupta.

Guhasena: Ramagupta's aide, sweet-tongued and conspiring warrior.

Samkhyacharya: An old *rishi*, an ascetic.

Vatsya: A brahmin, Parakramadeva's Minister and Ramagupta's Chief Minister on whom depended, as it was believed, the administration of the empire.

Yajnavalkya: The author of the best among *Smritis* (lawbooks), *Yajnavalkya Smriti*; that chief among yogins who indicated the path of peace and purity to the conquered world of Parakramadeva and, glazing the disciple's conquest by *dharma*, made Kusumpura the center of learning and culture.

Skanda: Parakramadeva's son born of another woman, not the great queen.

Daman: Skanda's maternal uncle.

NOTE: Munshi does not mention several minor characters who appear on stage. They are: *Shrotriya*, the learned brahmin (Act I); Jayadamana, Rudrasena's lieutenant, his warriors, and four Magadhan captains (Act II); a brahmin in Yajnavalkya's *ashrama*, Guhasena's warriors (Act III); and citizens (Act IV).

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Dhruvasvaminidevi

ACT I

[*Time*: After about 387 A.D. Parakramaditya[1] Samudragupta, known and remembered by the venerable title of 'Parakramadeva',[2] the memory of whose fame, bravery and glory has been a catalyst for people to retain such qualities in them, has died only a few months ago. His eldest son Sri Ramaguptadeva rules in Kusumpura, the capital of Magadha.

Dhruvadevi, the daughter of Achyutadeva of Champavati, is his Mahadevi, the great queen.

On the borders of Ujjeni,[3] Rudrasena, the great Kshatrapa King of Surashtra, Anarta and Malwa, is fighting against the Gupta armies. Ramagupta's younger brother Chandragupta, who had gone to participate in the war while Samudragupta was still alive, has not yet returned.

Place: A garden near the inner quarters of Mahadevi Dhruvadevi. The garden is surrounded by high walls on three sides, on the fourth can be seen the back terrace of the palace.

Kalidasa enters. His appearance does not indicate that about 30 or 40 years from now he is to write the *Shakuntala* or the *Meghaduta*.[4] At present he looks carefree and independent. He has put on a dhoti with meticulous care, has thrown his shoulder garment in style. A *tripunda* mark with saffron powder adorns his forehead and his oiled hair is well groomed. He is leaning against a champa tree and, with his toes, is playing with fallen flowers.]

[1] 'The Sun of valor'. [2] Lit. 'the valorous king'. [3] Ujjayini.
[4] In introducing the cast, Munshi describes Kalidasa as a twenty-one-year-old brahmin. This would mean that he wrote the *Shakuntala* and the *Meghaduta* at the age of fifty or sixty.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Kalidasa: (impatiently crushing a flower) How long is she going to keep me waiting? She is such a chatter box! Somehow I managed to sneak away from Acharyadeva[5] to get here; but her ladyship[6] is nowhere around. As is destiny, so is the damsel. They both take pleasure in tantalizing the unfortunate. (sighs)

[Shashilekha charges in displaying snobbery, looks around and turns away to leave. She seems to be arrogant. Her garments befit women of that time: a pleated long skirt is tied in the back; a silk scarf across her breasts is tied in the back with tassels hanging from it; a short scarf covers her head and shoulders.]

Shashilekha! Shashilekha!

Shashilekha: (laughing) Oh, Kalidasa?

Kalidasa: My greetings,[7] Shashilekha, what are you looking for?

Shashilekha: I had expected the garden to be barren.

Kalidasa: Since when did you start meditating in solitary places?

Shashilekha: (turning up her nose) Ever since I started painting my lover's portrait. I can't stand anybody's face when I draw his on my canvas.

Kalidasa: Frankly, I would not like to look at your face either, were it not for a question I want to ask you. (Shashilekha giggles) Don't giggle. Tell me what's the use of Shashilekha (the curve of the moon) if she is without Kaumudi (the moonlight)?[8]

Shashilekha: (making a face) You and your riddles! Who is

[5] Lit. 'the chief guru'; here, Yajnavalkya.
[6] *Mahamaya*, the term for a goddess, here used humorously.
[7] *Swasti*, a term of greetings; lit. 'may you be well', 'may you be prosperous'.
[8] *Kaumudi*, 'moonlight', used as a metaphor for Madhavi. Intended pun on the word Shashilekha, lit. 'curve of the moon.'

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

interested in solving them? Wait here, I will send Madhavi in. (leaves)

Kalidasa: What an air! She walks as though without her, the entire universe would collapse. Well, I don't blame her. Cupid is wonderful, he intoxicates even more than does the wine. Incited by him, two individuals, like Shiva and Shakti, may climb the Kailasa and may not care to cast a sympathetic glance on the rest of the world. Oof, what has happened to Madhavi? (sighs) It is easy to churn the ocean and acquire nectar,[9] but so difficult to get the nectar of a talkative beloved's lips.[10]

[Startled and excited, looks around. Madhavi, sharp, beautiful, and jingling,[11] comes running to Kalidasa and starts talking, indicating to him to keep quiet, with her finger on her nose. She is panting, her breasts are heaving; and eyes shining. Her lover oscillates between curiosity to know and eagerness to speak. Ecstasy of love manifests on both faces. Neither of them is aware that years later their blissful love will get reincarnated in Kalidasa's *Shakuntala* and *Meghaduta*, teaching lessons of love to the world for eternity.]

Madhavi: Listen to me —

Kalidasa: (eagerly) But listen to my story —

Madhavi: No, listen to mine. Don't say anything —

Kalidasa: But you haven't allowed me to utter a word!

Madhavi: (extending her arm) But just listen to me.

Kalidasa: No, I am not going to. (puts his hands on his ears).

Madhavi: I'll speak even if you don't hear. Listen, Mahadevi is in a very bad mood today.

[9] *Amrita*, lit. 'the drink of immortality,' nectar.
[10] *Adharamrita*, lit. 'nectar of the lower lip.'
[11] Since Madhavi was wearing anklets.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Kalidasa: (forgetfully)* How come?

Madhavi: I can tell you only if you listen.

Kalidasa: (laughing) All right, tell me, why?

Madhavi: Today Deva[12] is coming to see Mahadevi;[12] and so also Maharaj[13] Chandragupta who has just returned from the battlefield. Mahadevi is turning red and blue with anger.

Kalidasa: (laughing) I heard you, now will you listen to me?

Madhavi: He never allows me to finish.

Kalidasa: All right, go on.

Madhavi: Mahadevi is really mad at this.

Kalidasa: You have repeated that three times like a brahmin chanting the same verse over and over again.

Madhavi: Then listen to it for the fourth time. Mahadevi is observing a vow of abstinence; Deva wants to break it.

Kalidasa: How about telling me the same thing for the fifth time?

Madhavi: (turning her face in false anger) Go away, I am not going to tell you anything any more.

Kalidasa: Come on, don't get mad. Will you now listen to my story?

Madhavi: Look at him! Why do you say that? Have I ever said no?

* Kalidasa forgets to remove his hands from his ears but does so as he utters the next sentence.

[12] Deva, one of the meanings, 'king'; Mahadevi, 'chief queen'—used here for Ramagupta and Dhruvadevi in the play.

[13] Chandragupta is addressed and referred to as 'Maharaj' throughout the play. These terms (notes: 12 and 13), are Munshi's usage and not necessarily universal.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Kalidasa: Well; do you see anybody around?

Madhavi: (looking around) No.

Kalidasa: (rolling his eyes) Then, come closer and —

Madhavi: (making a face) No, first the story, then its price.

Kalidasa: Should somebody arrive, would I not remain unpaid for my story?

Madhavi: (suddenly giving him a quick kiss) Here you are. Now tell me.

Kalidasa: Listen.

Madhavi: I am listening.

Kalidasa: Maharaj Chandragupta is my childhood friend.

Madhavi: Don't I hear that every day?

Kalidasa: Today I went to see him when he arrived; we hugged —

Madhavi: (making a face) Now try to ever touch me.

Kalidasa: Silly! Listen. With Maharaj there were four stalwarts — Acharyadeva who has been regenerating the entire land of Parakramadeva with *dharma*; Prime Minister Vatsya who manipulates Shastras;[14] Minister Kumar who controls *rajaniti* (statesmanship) as his hand-maid; and Amrakardam, the son of Undan, the terror in hundreds of battles. All these four pillars of the universe kept looking as Maharaj embraced me and asked me in a whisper, "What have you composed recently?"

Madhavi: (impressed) Aryaputra,[15] somehow everyone seems

[14] The reference here is to the political and economic treatises like *Arthashastra*, *Dandaniti*, *Rajaniti*, etc.

[15] A way of addressing lover or husband.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

to go crazy over you right away.

Kalidasa: But do you know why he is here?

Madhavi: You are supposed to be his childhood friend, why don't you tell me?

Kalidasa: Listen dear, just as pride oozes from the elephant, heroism exudes from my friend. (in a whisper) He has come to take along Deva to Ujjayini to participate in the war.

Madhavi: (bursting into laughter) Deva to participate in the war! Perhaps I would do that before he does. Anyhow, what do they need him there for?

Kalidasa: Once again after a long time, my friend feels that Deva by going to Ujjayini might inspire our demoralized army against the Shaka king. But my friend is ignorant that cowardice follows *parakrama*[16] (valor) just as the night follows the day.

Madhavi: So, I hope you told him everything.

Kalidasa: I did. I also informed him about Mahadevi.

Madhavi: Since he is coming to Pataliputra[17] after two years, maybe he has not even seen Mahadevi yet.

Kalidasa: My friend had stayed in Champavati when he marched off to Surashtra during Parakramadeva's life-time; maybe he saw her then. I told him how she was married, how she lived, why she remains in seclusion, etc.

Madhavi: My goodness, in that case, I am sure, you told him about me too. Now you'll see.

Kalidasa: (plucks a champa flower and throws it at her)

[16] The word used here is *parakrama*—an intended pun—which refers to Parakramadeva Samudragupta. [17] Another name for Kusumpura.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Just as a *shrotriya*[18] cannot help reciting the Vedas, I cannot help talking about you.

Madhavi: And I cannot live without you. Aryaputra, when will the Sun descend from Leo?[19]

Kalidasa: My devi, it shall descend and I will marry you.

Madhavi: Here comes Mahadevi.

Kalidasa: Lo, Madhavi! Look at the proud lady, poor Mahadevi. Lustrous and alone, she roams in these magnificent palaces. She is like an unpatronized *Rajalakshmi*[20] of Parakramadeva. (looks on)

Madhavi: Such a condition of Mahadevi reduces me to tears. From dawn to dusk, she hardly utters a word.

Kalidasa: Such (a beautiful) figure, such (a noble) soul, and what (a terrible) fate! Look at this embodiment of magnificence and pathos! How dejected is her gait! She resembles a pale slender curve of the moon lost at the break of dawn.

[Dhruvadevi enters with slow pace. Her wide eyes are lifeless. Her pale and stern face makes the surroundings unbearable with the heaviness of her sorrow. She walks gently. From every limb of hers, drip dignity and petrified beauty. She slowly walks off toward the garden.]

Kalidasa: Oh dear Bholanath,[21] when you created her, why did you also not create (her match) who could enjoy her?

Madhavi: (softly) I wish she had realized her dreams as I did mine —

[18] Reciter of the Vedas, a Vedic ascetic.

[19] Marriages are not solemnized during this planetary position; astrologically it would entail bad luck.

[20] Lit. 'wealth of the kingdom', also an epithet for the queen.

[21] Kalidasa, a brahmin, was a shaivaite, and here he invokes Bholanath, i.e. Shiva. The Gupta Kshatriyas, the followers of *Bhagavata dharma*, worshipped Vishnu.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Shashilekha: (comes running) Madhavi, did you hear something?

Madhavi and Kalidasa: What?

Shashilekha: Didn't a *rishi* come here?

Madhavi: Yes, he expected *gurudakshina*[22] from Deva.

Shashilekha: Deva drove him out of the palace.

Kalidasa: What, he insulted that *shrotriya*?

Shashilekha: Yes.

[Everybody looks at one another stunned. Meanwhile Dhruvadevi returns and they watch her with respect. Dhruvadevi comes forward and both the girls bow down to her.]

Dhruvadevi: (in soft, sad voice) Who was driven out?

Shashilekha: Somadatta, a *shrotriya* from Brahmaranya, who had come for *gurudakshina*.

Dhruvadevi: (looking up, after some time) Shashilekha, go and request him to come here. (Shashilekha quietly leaves).

Kalidasa: (trying to please her, smiling) My Lady, we have received some gifts from Kuntaleshvara and our Minister of War and Peace is to pay him a visit. (Dhruvadevi looks on, silently) Bhagavati[23] is going to Varanasi for the inaugural ceremony of the temple of Lord Sankarshana.[24] From tomorrow we commence the reading of the hundred-thousand-verse *Samhita*[25] — (Dhruvadevi smiles in disgust.

[22] "Gifts for the guru"—the term is used for charity to a learned brahmin.
[23] Refers to Dattadevi.
[24] Balarama, Krishna's brother. *Sankarshana* refers to drawing of the foetus from Devki and its impregnation into Rohini's womb.
[25] In his footnote, Munshi glosses this word as "*Mahabharata*" which has hundred-thousand verses.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

So halting with embarrassment, he makes another attempt to please her) My Lady, you probably know that Maharaj Chandragupta has arrived from Ujjayini and anxiously awaits the *darshana* of the Rajalakshmi of the Gupta family.[26]

Dhruvadevi: I am not a goddess for those crazy for *darshana*.

Kalidasa: Your Excellency, you have not even seen him.

Madhavi: He is a very fine man, you will certainly be happy to meet him. (Dhruvadevi shakes her head) My Lady, you will see. When he fights with a lion, he drains its life out.[27]

Dhruvadevi: (coolly) In this family, everyone drains someone's life out.

Kalidasa: But Maharaj is Lord Kartikeya (god of war) incarnate.

Chandragupta: (off stage) I don't need any permission.

Shashilekha: (off stage in a stifled voice) Your Excellency!

[Dhruvadevi quietly glares with displeasure.]

Kalidasa: Here he is.

[Chandragupta enters with Shashilekha. He has put his hand on Shashilekha's mouth as she tries to speak. He is a tall, handsome, young man of twenty-four. His curly hair spreads on his shoulders. His large loving eyes reveal frankness. He has a smiling face and he walks unhesitatingly. His head-dress resembles that of the Kushan kings. Small iron plates are stuck on his leather armor. He is wearing tight, matching breeches and poin-

[26] *Darshana*, 'seeing', *Rajalakshmi*, 'the embodiment of the prosperity of the land'.

[27] Munshi refers to a historical lion-slaying episode engraved on the coins of Chandragupta II. For more information see Basham, p. 381.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

ted shoes. Having conquered the power and wealth of alien Kushanas, Parakramadeva had adopted their fighting traditions is evident from Chandragupta's outfit. He is carrying a spear with a hanging tassel on it.]

Chandragupta: Mahadevi, pardon my indulgence. This twirp of a little girl would not allow me to enter your palace. (smiles mischievously)

Dhruvadevi: (as though dazzled by resplendence, she flutters her eyelids, and out of shyness places her hand on her chest. Pressing her lips, she looks at a familiar face in an unfamiliar way. Softly) Maharaj!

Chandragupta: (enthusiastically) When I got an opportunity to step on this soil and seek your Ladyship's grace for the first time in two years, this overwise girl tells me: "Please, wait outside."

[He pretends to draw his sword at Shashilekha. Dhruvadevi tries to regain composure but cannot speak.]

My Lady, I am going back tomorrow. Could I ever go away without your blessings? And (to Kalidasa) this friend of mine —

Kalidasa: May you be victorious, Maharaj!

Chandragupta: So, is this your — (abashed, Madhavi looks down).

Kalidasa: Did I not tell you, like Shankar and Parvati we...

Chandragupta: (smiling a little) Or shall I say, like two love-birds, you both always keep chirping!

Kalidasa: Maharaj!

Chandragupta: (smiling) I know this brahmin very well. When we were young, he used to run away to play with Madhavi under some pretext. (looking at Dhruvadevi, he

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

stops. Devi, having composed herself, stares with sad eyes, resembling a statue). My Lady, my Lady, why are you so serious? Having killed the Shakas for two years, — now that I have come home — how can you be so withdrawn and quiet? I command as the son of *Prithvipati* (the lord of earth) and the brother of the King.

Kalidasa: My Lady, please don't misunderstand him. He always acts as if he owns the world.

Chandragupta: (laughs) My dear poet, yes, the world is certainly ours — of the sons of Parakramadeva. (sits on the seat around a tree) My Lady, please be seated. (Dhruvadevi sits down with dignity and poise, at some distance). Do you know why I am here, my Lady? The Shakas who used to tremble even at the mention of my father's name are now fearless and powerful. Mahakshatrapa Rudrasena is invading Ujjayini. Our armies require Deva's command and inspiration. (Dhruvadevi keeps staring with disgust) I have come to take you both to Ujjayini.

Dhruvadevi: Aren't you capable by yourself?

Chandragupta: (smiling) I am merely Chandragupta, not Ramagupta, the king of kings. (Dhruvadevi breathes a sigh) But look at this, my brother does not have the time even to see me!

Kalidasa: Maharaj, he will never consent to come.

Chandragupta: Why will he not? It is up to you to send him.

Dhruvadevi: (shaking her head sadly) No.

Chandragupta: (undaunted) Why not? Mahadevi, the burden of the entire world is on you, on Mahadevi Dhruvadevi of the Gupta family. (Dhruvadevi smiles derisively, Chandragupta corrects himself) On both of you — Deva and Mahadevi.

Kalidasa: And on Vishnu and Lakshmi.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Chandragupta: (mimicking) Just as all the burden is on you and Madhavi. My Lady, you are the daughter of a valorous father and heroic mother. I have heard your mother's praise; and in this family, you adorn the same position today that Kumardevi and Dattadevi once did. Now when the glory of the Shrigupta family is likely to be blemished, why are you so withdrawn?

Dhruvadevi: (looking down, softly) I am not interested in remembering the vanished glories.[28]

Chandragupta: (amazed) Vanished glory! My Lady, even today, witnessing the magnificence of Parakramadeva's glory, the Sun halts and gods tremble. Then why do you speak thus? Your place is on the battlefield.

Dhruvadevi: (sadly but firmly) My place is here (with bitterness) in the great palaces of the Guptas.

Chandragupta: (persuasively) My Lady, do not forget these palaces only reflect the outward splendor. Kumardevi was on the battlefield for eight years. Dattadevi participated in victory marches for several years with Parakramadeva.

Dhruvadevi: (pressing her lips, shaking her head) I am different.

Chandragupta: (boldly coming closer) Or do you intend to be different?

Kalidasa: (to Madhavi) Come, let us go.

Madhavi: Your Excellency, if you command, I shall arrange for incense and garlands.

[Dhruvadevi nods in consent.]

Kalidasa: And I shall also leave.

[28] Glory of India's past always fascinated Munshi. An early work of his was about the vanished glory of Gujarat, entitled 'The Graves of Vanished Empires.'

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Chandragupta: (laughing) My friend, if Madhavi leaves, can Kalidasa stay behind? Well, go.

[Kalidasa and Madhavi exit.]

My Lady, why do you strive to be thus? Why such seclusion at this age? Why such silence? Why such renunciation? For what? I am stunned by all this. Have the merits of the good deeds of the Mahabhagavatas been exhausted?

Dhruvadevi: (slightly moving away) Who says that?

Chandragupta: (getting up, pleading) My Lady, why do you speak thus? I know you very well. Before your marriage I had stayed in Champavati at Achyutadeva's. When I saw you there, my Lady, you were luminous like lightning on account of your heroism and inspiring words. (Dhruvadevi looks down and sighs) Now when the world is raving for your luster and valor, what is this? Tell me.

Dhruvadevi: (with pride) What could there be?

Chandragupta: Tell me, my Lady, please tell me. What is amiss between you and my brother? I share your happiness and prosperity. If you, the *Rajalakshmi*, the wealth of the entire world, speak like this, what will happen to the universe?[29] Do you recall, while you were in Champavati, Bhagavati and Kumardevi were your ideals?

Dhruvadevi: (painfully) It is better to talk only of today.

Chandragupta: Dhruvadevi, I will patch up any rift between you and my brother.

Dhruvadevi: (with pride and anger) I do not need anybody to patch up anything for me. I am fine as I am.

Chandragupta: (comprehending Dhruvadevi's pride) Forgive

[29] 'fourteen worlds' indicate the universe, according to ancient Indian writings.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

me, I spoke without thinking. My Lady, I know you are unhappy. I do understand that its roots are deep. But won't you allow me to do what I can? You probably feel that we all are concerned only with the valor and the glory of the Shrigupta family, and do not care for you! (emotionally) Please tell me Mahadevi, tell me.

Dhruvadevi: Achyutadeva's daughter only listens, she does not tell.

Chandragupta: But what is the matter? Let me know! If it is not to be conveyed to anybody, not a word will be uttered by me. Besides, I am going away tomorrow. What is the cause of your pain?

[Dhruvadevi moves away and looks on with pride.]

Madhavi: (comes charging in) Your Excellency, Maharaj, Deva is coming this way.

[Dhruvadevi pressing her lips regains composure.]

Panegyrist: (off stage)

Whose glorious fame like a row of flames burns swarms of enemies,
But in circles of friends spreads soothingly like sandlewood paste,
Always remains high up like a flagpost in the Shrigupta family,
He the grandson of the best among men, Chandra[30] and his consort, Kumardevi —
Having submerged all standards of comparison in one's own waters,
Having crossed all boundaries, King Samudragupta[31] still reverberates in this and the other world;
His son, the rival of the chief of Devas in truth, morals and valor, Ramagupta,

[30] Chandragupta I.
[31] *Samudra*, 'ocean'. *Swasalile* 'in one's own waters' in the previous line refers to the waters of the 'ocean' in this line.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Indra among kings, may protect the land that has surrendered.

King, the holder of the deadly axe,
Valorous performer of horse sacrifice,
The bosom of valor, Indra among kings,
May you be happy by your son's prowess.

The chamberlain: (off stage) King of kings, Deva, this way. The great Bhagavata, this way.

[Ramagupta enters. This heir of Parakramadeva's glory, decked with a crown, silken garments, and royal jewelery, chews the betel leaf (*pan*). He is slim and has worn a yellow garment. Black circles surround his drowsy eyes. His hair is loose. He wears a contemptuous smile. He staggers a little as he walks. Greek damsels follow him. One of them is carrying a fan of peacock feathers, the other carries a spittle. The group is followed by Kalidasa and Madhavi. Dhruvadevi joins her hands and bows as she mumbles.]

Chandragupta: (prostrates himself) My Lord, brother, may you be victorious! Be victorious!

Ramagupta: (wiping his teeth with his tongue) Mahadevi, when I sent a message that I was to visit you why did you refuse to see me? (with contempt) Who is this? What brings you here, Chandra? Didn't I send a message with Guhasena that I was not free?

Chandragupta: (looking at him with pride) My Lord, you — the son of Parakramadeva — cannot spare the time to hear the tidings of war?

Ramagupta: (laughing) My dear brother, since you have just arrived, you are pardoned. Listen, in our enjoyment and pleasures we let nobody disturb us.

Chandragupta: (impatiently) What are you saying, my Lord?

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Ramagupta: (laughing) My dear, don't panic. Days of Parakramadeva are gone, now I am the lord of the world.

Chandragupta: But if you persist in this, how long will you remain the lord of the world?

Ramagupta: (laughing) Let that not worry you. Should not somebody enjoy the world conquered by the valor of four generations?

Chandragupta: (glancing significantly at Dhruvadevi) But I have come to take you to the battlefield. Kshatrapa Rudrasena is roaring mad; the Commander General needs more battalions; and most of all, we need you. Unless you come, the army is not going to regain its morale.

Ramagupta: (smiling) Dear brother, Parakramadeva always used to say that his glory would be preserved by you. So you encourage his army, I enjoy his wealth. (laughs loudly) Mahadevi, isn't it true? Malika, Madhurika, don't you agree?

Chandragupta: (with suppressed anger) So you won't come?

Ramagupta: My good man, if I came along, what will you do? What will Undan do? Tell Undan on your return that the great Bhagavatas were conquerors of the world till now, now they are its ravishers. Dear brother, you have still remained the same; you spent your entire lifetime fighting, but you are not yet satisfied!

Chandragupta: (seriously) But you will have to come with me.

Ramagupta: (laughing) Forget it.

Chandragupta: (persistently) I will kidnap you. You will have to come, and so will my Lady.

Ramagupta: (cunningly) Oh, that's what you are here for? Leave this useless effort. Malika, keep this garland for me. (Shashilekha enters) Who is this, Shashilekha! What

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

brings you here?

Shashilekha: Victory to my Lord! Victory to my Lady! Your Excellency, I delivered your message to Acharya-deva. He has sent this venerable *shrotriya* here. Here he comes.

[A young *shrotriya,* wearing sylvan apparel, enters.]

Ramagupta: Shashilekha, (knitting his brows) Why have you called him here? I had him driven out this morning.

Chandragupta: (bowing) May you be pleased, oh great brahmin.

Dhruvadevi: (bowing) Arya, I bow to you.

Shrotriya: May you be victorious, prince. Greetings, Lady.

Ramagupta: Hey you there, whoever sent for you here?

Dhruvadevi: (looking up with anger) I did.

Shrotriya: (with dignity) Oh king, being guided by my guru I came here. I was not aware that Ashvamedha Parakrama now resides in heaven. Had I known the kind of person who is now guarding the world, I would not have stepped into Kusumpura.

Chandragupta: (with folded hands) *Tapodhana,*[32] please tell us what brings you here.

Shrotriya: Instructed by my guru I had come for *gurudakshina.* Now I will return.

Chandragupta: (looking around with discomfort) You came for *gurudakshina* from Parakramadeva and would you return empty handed? Oh best among brahmins, (removing and offering his earrings and necklace) how often does one

[32] 'One whose wealth is penance,' 'rich in penance'.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

have the good fortune of satisfying a *shrotriya*? Please accept this and do inform your guru that no *shrotriya* will ever leave empty handed, while the family of Shrigupta rules the world. (looks at Dhruvadevi. She gently smiles. Chandragupta folds his hands) You may find this insufficient —

Shrotriya: (giving blessings) No, my son, this is plenty. May you attain glory as your father did. Lady, may you be blessed.

[Everybody except Chandragupta, Dhruvadevi and Ramagupta bows to him. The *Shrotriya* leaves.]

Ramagupta: (with disgust) You fool, do you know what will happen to your earrings and necklace? He will trade them for cows and keep hawking hymns for the rest of his life.

Chandragupta: (looks at Dhruvadevi who is trembling with utter contempt) Brother, what is wrong with you? Have you already forgotten your *Rajadharma* (duty as a king) taught by Yajnavalkya — the best among yogins? Wealth offered to a brahmin itself is the king's imperishable treasure. His cows will yield us all our desires.[33] His life will personify our glory; his recital of hymns will enable us to attain *moksha* (salvation).

Ramagupta: (laughing) Yes, indeed. Who on earth would give importance to Acharya, if he did not preach thus?

Chandragupta: (impatiently) Who would give importance to Acharya! Who would have given importance to our family, had it not been for the efforts of that supreme yogin? Do you forget what Parakramadeva used to say? "Wherever prevails the Smriti of Acharyadeva, there follows the glory of the family of Shrigupta."

Ramagupta: (laughing) And you believe in all that, eh? (with disgust) You have not changed at all. My dear,

[33] *Kamadudha*, a variant for *Kamadhenu*, the fabulous cow that fulfills all desires.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

you better go back. That age has changed. Chandra, didn't I tell you? Now I wield the supreme sceptre of Shrigupta.

Chandragupta: (impatiently) Yes, I am aware of it. But if you are not aware, may you realize that this sceptre is thirsty of valor and is itself imbued with *dharma*. The supreme king who wields it, is left with no alternative but to perform deeds of valor and protect *dharma*.

Ramagupta: Don't worry, brother, I will find valorous men when I need them.

Chandragupta: (with disgust) Such words from you?

Ramagupta: (laughing) Yes. Madhurika, my mouth is dry. Give me a betel leaf. (pinches Madhurika on the cheek) Devi, never again send such a message. I am spending the night here.

Dhruvadevi: (suddenly looking up with pride and firmness) I do not deserve such favor.

Ramagupta: (with insolent laugh) Who knows that better, you or I? Come over, sit here (indicates the seat next to him).

Chandragupta: (realizes from Dhruvadevi's angry face) My Lord, I am going back to Ujjayini tomorrow. You will have to go with me; Mahadevi is prepared to go.

The chamberlain: (off stage) Bhagavati, this way, this way.

[Bhagavati Dattadevi enters. She is an able lady of 70 and has a hooked nose. She wears a plain white garment and a long necklace. Looking at her face, one can say that she must have been beautiful when young. It is evident that in her entire life she has yielded to none. On account of being a life partner of an immensely strong-willed husband, tenderness and shyness peep through her seemingly impenetrable dignity.]

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Ramagupta: (with folded hands) Welcome mother, welcome.

Chandragupta: (bowing low) May you be pleased, mother.

Dhruvadevi: (bowing low) Bhagavati, accept my humble greetings.

Dattadevi: May you all live long, my children (sits near Ramagupta).

Chandragupta: Mother, I spoke to brother but he refuses to go to Ujjayini.

Dattadevi: (with dignity) Refuses! Why?

Ramagupta: Chandra, in a short time you seem to have got around everybody.

Chandragupta: I came to you first, but you could not spare the time. So what else could I do?

Dattadevi: (to Ramagupta) My son, you will have to go. Our army can regain its morale only if you go.

Ramagupta: (clenching his teeth) Did I ask your advice, mother? I don't want to go, all right?

Dattadevi: But son, that will blemish your father's glory.

Ramagupta: Oh God! Ever since I have been enthroned, I have heard of nothing else but Parakramadeva's glory. It does not leave me alone, nor does anybody let me forget it. (everybodoy looks at him with anger. Chandragupta and Dhruvadevi look at each other) Shall I make this clear? I do not rule for the glory of the dead, I rule for my pleasures. If Chandragupta here craves for glory, let him be killed fighting for it. Have I ever said no to that? But I don't want to be bothered by it.

[Spits a mouthful into the spittle and eats yet another betel leaf.]

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Dattadevi: Son, if people heard such words, what would they say?

Ramagupta: But I will tell them that I will go the way I please, no other way.

Dattadevi: (sorrowfully) My son, my heart is inflamed by such words of yours.

Ramagupta: (coolly) Maybe it is. It is not surprising. Parakramadeva has formed a bad habit in you by taking you with him in all his wanderings for the entire life; he did not eat, drink or enjoy the pleasures of life. Is that my fault?

Chandragupta: (with a fierce voice) That's enough, brother. Be warned, if you utter a single insulting word about Parakramadeva! Do not speak in my presence even one impolite word about my father and yours, who was the Sun of Aryan glory, and whose words were a terror to all the three worlds. Had somebody else spoken such words ...If you can't hear of his valorous deeds, close your ears. Were it not for that great soul, the sceptre of the entire world would not have fallen in your lap.

Ramagupta: (derisively) I know it. You would have grabbed it, if you could.

Dattadevi: (knitting her brows) Son, when you utter such words, I regret having given birth to you.

Ramagupta: What of it now? What is done cannot be undone. Madhurika, I don't think anybody will leave me peacefully here. Let's go. Mother, I am going.

Dattadevi: Son, listen to me. Go to Ujjayini.

Chandragupta: (with a frightening voice) He shall go, he has no choice.

Ramagupta: (with contempt) If I don't go, what will you do?

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Let's hear it.

Chandragupta: What will I do? (holding Ramagupta's hand) Brother, remember this. You are not master of just your own self. You are the master of us all, of the Arya land, of the entire world; you are the lord of ten *Akshauhini*[34] armies. You live by and for the glory of Shrigupta family. You dare not (clenches his teeth) betray us, or blemish our glory.

Ramagupta: (with tight lips) I won't go.

Chandragupta: (with fiery eyes) Then I will kidnap you. I have not come here in vain. My Generals and I will carry you, will lock you up in the inner quarters. Shall we ever allow the world to know that Parakramadeva's son refused to go to the battlefield?

Ramagupta: I won't go.

Dhruvadevi: (stepping forward, with firmness and calmness) In that case Maharaj, I will go with you. (everybody looks stunned) I, the Mahadevi of the Guptas, will go against the Shakas, if need be. Maharaj, I am ready. Bhagavati! (bows to Dattadevi).

Chandragupta: (delighted) My Lady! (Dhruvadevi responds with a smile, for the first time without bitterness).

Dattadevi: (hugging Dhruvadevi) My dear daughter, be victorious. May you have sons who would immortalize the glory of our family.

Chandragupta: (with joy of victory, to Ramagupta) And my Lord, I am going to carry you in a cage tomorrow.

Ramagupta: Everybody has conspired against me (laughing insolently, turns to Kalidasa) Kalia, don't you have something to add?

[34] 'Complete army'. An army consisting of 21,870 chariots, as many elephants, 65,610 horses and 1,09,850 foot soldiers.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Kalidasa: (with folded hands) What could I have to say, my Lord? Just as all flames turn toward the sky, all Guptas turn toward valor.

Ramagupta: Shut up! Malika, Madhurika, let's go. (they all exit).

Dattadevi: My child, whatever pleases Vishnu is good. My son, (to Chandragupta) it is soothing to see you. And Dhruvadevi, it is gratifying to hear you today. You will redeem both the families, I am sure. I shall leave now (looks at Chandragupta and Dhruvadevi).

Chandragupta: Yes, mother (to Dhruvadevi) I will go now and prepare him, you get ready.

Dhruvadevi: (bowing her head, self-possessed) All right.

[Dattadevi and Chandragupta leave. As he leaves, Chandragupta turns around and looks. Dhruvadevi too turns around a little. After he leaves, Dhruvadevi closes her eyes for a few seconds and then looks up, pressing her lips. She gathers her robe and leaves. Kalidasa is left alone. He smiles.]

CURTAIN

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Dhruvasvaminidevi

ACT II

[*Time*: About two and a half months later. Early evening.[1]

Place: The palace in Ujjayini. Rows and rows of stone pillars can be seen on three sides, with a garden in the rear. There is a huge assembly hall in the center. A banistered staircase of white stone descends on the right side. In the center of the hall, there are some seats studded with gold. Commander General Undan is seated on one of them. He is a 65 or 70-year old strong warrior. Streaks of white hair peep out from under his bandage on the head. His arm too is bandaged. His other hand rests on a sword lying by his side. His eyes are burning red on account of sleepless nights; he wipes the sweat from his forehead now and then.

Rohal, the chief of cavalry, is leaning against the banister of the staircase. A bandage on his arm is stained with blood. His face betrays signs of sleeplessness, hunger, tension and annoyance as he stands with his face down.

Everybody is quiet.

A loud cry is heard from a distance: "Victory to the great Kshatrapa."

Rohal looks at Undan remorsefully and sighs. Undan, startled, looks around as though awakened from sleep; he looks dejected.]

Undan: (screaming in a hoarse voice, hitting his knee) Do I have to witness this at this age? Only yesterday I won the whole world and today I am in the hands of the Ksha-

[1] Munshi indicates time as 'two *praharas* after noon.' A *prahara* is about 3 hours. The time would be six p.m.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

trapa! (looks around like a confused animal, like a snake caught in pincers.) What can be done? We're dead—like the dead... Oh Lord.[2]

Rohal: (respectfully, in a dejected voice) General, do we have to remain alive and witness this?

[Looks down and stands with folded hands.]

Undan: (impatiently) The Shaka king destroys our forts and penetrates into our Ujjayini! And we surrender! Alas, alas! This gulp of poison in store for Parakramadeva's General!

[Arises and walks back and forth with his hands on his waist.]

Rohal: (after a while) Chief, our entire army flew away like a flock of pigeons.

Undan: (with dilated eyes) Rohal, Rohal, I never experienced, saw or imagined such a defeat. (leans his head on his hand) This annihilation is altogether because of Deva. (clenches his teeth) Oh Lord Kartikeya, such a father, and such a son! Deva did not let us attack first; then at a wrong time he rushed on the battlefield; and at a crucial moment he fled from the field. At this age why did I lose my head and send for him here?

Rohal: (shakes his head) All my warriors died... poor souls!

Undan: (painfully) Rohal, they were fortunate. It is we who have to experience misery; we have to witness the sunset of Parakramadeva's glory.

[Puts his hand on his head and walks around.]

Rohal: (after a while) How come Harisena has not returned yet?

[2] Munshi annotates : *Swami*, 'Lord' as "Lord Kartikeya—the worship of the patron god of war was prevalent then."

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Undan: (bemoaning) I have to accept the terms of the Shaka king... (clenching his teeth) Despite all the vain efforts, I am still alive. (sound of approaching horses) Harisena seems to have arrived. What will I do? Will he rattle the shackles of slavery into our ears? (approaches Rohal and puts his hand on his shoulder) Rohal, my son, behead me before the Shaka king arrests me. Son, I have never seen anything but victory since my childhood. And I don't want to live to see anything else. Rohal, please obey this command of mine. Take my sword; I can hear Harisena coming.

Rohal: (dejected, with folded hands) General, chief of preceptors, do I behead you? How can I ever do that?

Undan: (imploring) Dearer than son, Rohal, some day my son may send me to heaven by obsequial oblation;[3] but today, you send me to heaven by your own hand.

[Offers his sword to Rohal, but he does not take it. Meanwhile Harisena enters. He, the son of Dhruvabhuti, is a commander, minister of war and peace, and poet. He is destined to earn the credit for redeeming the Gupta family, fifteen hundred years later. Who among them could know that only by his eulogy on Samudragupta, found in Allahabad, will the future generations know about the emperor's conquest of the world?

Harisena is armored but carries no weapons. He looks serious and downcast, but his face is more lustrous than Undan's or Rohal's. His eyes, face, voice, and gait reveal nobility. He is strong and healthy and is about 40 years old.]

Harisena: General, what are you doing? The Shaka king is coming this way.

[Undan moves away and stares in amazement.]

[3] *Pinda dana*, 'obsequial oblation,' refers to the offering of rice balls made by the son to his father after the funeral. A. L. Basham explains that without this ceremony, the dead's ghost (*preta*) " is unable to pass on to the world of the fathers (*pitruloka*) or to a new birth (*punar janma*)." A. L. Basham, p. 177.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Undan: Here? What for? To arrest us? To kill us?

Harisena: No. He does not want to arrest us. He is personally coming to acquire all the three: army, wealth and land from Deva.

Undan: (vigorously shaking his arms) I, the acquirer of army, wealth and land, today will surrender them to the Shaka king! (shaking his head in dejection) Oh Lord, what is happening?

Harisena: (pacifying) Compose yourself, General. If you are so upset in this time of crisis, what will happen to us? Please save this moment.

Undan: Save what, my fate? In fifty years I have never retreated my advanced step. Oh, I feel like breaking my head.

[Trotting of horses is heard off stage.]

Harisena: General, be composed, please. The Mahakshatrapa is here. Should the enemy hear the laments of a hero?

Undan: Rohal, go, request Deva to come here.

Ramagupta: (on the stairs) Harisena, here I am. I have been waiting for you only.

[Ramagupta seems drunk. In his characteristic way, he is followed by two Greek girls with his parapharnelia. He slowly descends from the stairs, and sits on one of the seats crossing his legs, and carelessly looks at everybody. All along, regardless of the code of behaviour, Rohal continues to look down. Undan, with clenched teeth and fierce looks, glares at Ramagupta. Only Harisena, with vague contempt, shows outward respect with folded hands.]

Harisena: May you be victorious, Deva.

Ramagupta: (with a false smile) So, does the Shaka king want to kill us or let us go?

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Harisena: (sadly) My gracious Lord, he will let us go,... but only after cutting our nose.[4]

Ramagupta: (laughing loudly) We can do without the nose, if we can remain alive. But where on earth is that Chandra? He has a foolish fad to fight with the whole world. Tell him what he got, now. (laughs impudently. Everybody looks at him with quiet contempt) Hey, Madhurika, go, call our Mahadevi here. She should not miss this occasion.

Harisena: (folding his hands) Pardon me Deva, but why do we need Mahadevi here? This is not an occasion for comely gentle ladies.

Ramagupta: (laughing, with sarcasm) My good man, is Mahadevi a comely gentle lady? If Kumardevi and Dattadevi participated in foreign affairs, why not Dhruvadevi? Go, Madhurika, lead her over here.

[Madhurika leaves. Everybody sits quietly. Undan gives vent to his annoyance by grumbling. A conch is heard from outside.]

Harisena: Rohal, come with me. Let us lead the Shaka king in.

[Both leave. Nobody utters a word.]

Ramagupta: Undan, you still seem angry. I had told you from the beginning that my heart is an ocean of compassion. (smiling) The minute I see a shining sword or flowing blood, I crave for the peace of a palace or the pleasures of a grove.

[Bursts into laughter as though he played a joke on Undan. Not being able to control his rage, the General gets up from his seat vigorously shaking his head, and forgetting Deva's presence, starts walking back and forth with his face down.]

[4] "to inflict an insult." The idiom is literally translated here to retain the relevance of the mention of the nose later.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Undan: (grumbling aloud) Brought destruction on us all.

Harisena: (off stage) This way Mahakshatrapa, this way.

[Everybody is quiet. After a few moments, Harisena and Rohal lead in fifty fully armed warriors. Mahakshatrapa Rudrasena quickly follows Harisena and Rohal, shaking his arms.

For many decades, the Shaka Mahakshatrapas had ruled Surashtra, Anarta, and Malwa. Prior to that they were rulers of Ujjayini or Junagadh. A writing of the Mahakshatrapa Rudradamana can be found engraved on a stone near Girnar. These foreign rulers had accepted Shaivism. With the gradual rise of the Guptas, the Shaka empire started declining. Parakramadeva captured Malwa from them and established his power in Ujjayini. Mahakshatrapa Rudrasena has shattered that power now.

Rudrasena is fair, muscular, and a little short. His beard, big eyes, and buck nose make his face fierce. His hair hangs loose on his shoulders. He wears golden armor and a sword, and carries an axe in his hand. That he is the conqueror of the Mahabhagavatas of Magadha can be discerned from his eyes, speech and gait. He walks into the hall taking big strides. He looks first at Undan standing with his head bent, and then at seated Ramagupta. Behind him enter twenty to thirty similarly armed warriors who look around with the curiosity of strangers.]

Harisena: (prostrating before Ramagupta) May you be victorious my Lord, Oh king of kings, Mahakshatrapa Rudrasena has arrived.

[Amused by this code of behavior, Rudrasena laughs aloud. He hops across first to Undan and then to Ramagupta and keeps staring at them as though they were strange creatures.]

Rudrasena: Yes, I have arrived! (hops over to Undan) Hey, this is Undan! Ha-ha-ha! I recognize him. He often gave

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

us a hard time. He captured my father twice and me once. Hello, old fogey, do you recognize me?

[Undan quietly keeps staring. Rudrasena hops over to Ramagupta and looks at him intently.]

And is this Samudragupta's son Ramagupta? (laughs aloud with upturned head).

Ramagupta: (to Harisena) Harisena, tell him to use the language human beings can understand.

Rudrasena: (stops laughing and with one arm on his waist, tries to intimidate Ramagupta) You can't understand my words eh? You will understand, you will, just wait. (strokes his beard) So, you are the son of the man who killed my father and who captured my kingdom of Malwa, aren't you?

Ramagupta: (turning toward Harisena) If he is referring to Parakramadeva, he is right.

Rudrasena: (shaking his head) Samudragupta's son...

Ramagupta: (with cold contempt) The same, we call him Parakramadeva.

Rudrasena: (rubs his hands vigorously) Ha, ha! At last vengeance is mine. (to his Commander-in-chief) Jayadamana, at last I fell Ujjayini. Samudragupta captured my father, I captured his son. (laughs loudly).

Ramagupta: Harisena, tell him in a language that he understands, that his feet will hurt him if he keeps walking like this.

Rudrasena: (glares angrily at Ramagupta, and then looks at his feet. Once again he looks at Ramagupta) I shall keep moving, I'll do as I please. Malwa is mine, Ujjeni is mine, you are mine; now I'll do whatever I like. Ha, ha, ha! Ramagupta, now you are in my grip, should I crush you?

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

(snaps his fingers).

Ramagupta: (coolly) Today, I can't deny you anything.

Rudrasena: You people teased life out of my father and me for thirty years; now you are really trapped.

Ramagupta: Harisena, why don't you explain to him? Whether he repeats it seven times or mentions it once, that we are trapped is an established fact. But now, is he going to find some way out or just talk?

Rudrasena: (hops over to Undan) You captured me once, do you remember Undan?

[Undan keeps looking at him with pride. Harisena comes forward and folds his hands.]

Harisena: Mahakshatrapa, great king, the king of kings Ramagupta inquires about your proposed terms of treaty.

Rudrasena: That is easy. You did not kill us, we do not want to kill you. But I don't like this old fogey. (points at Undan) Tomorrow he might again get restless, so give whatever I ask for today.

Harisena: (in a very sweet voice) But Mahakshatrapa, what do you want? Mahakshatrapa, may it be remembered that generosity bejewels victory. The Mahakshatrapas of Surashtra have always followed that code.

Rudrasena: (laughing) I am well aware of the policies of the Mahakshatrapas and so do I know what I want. Harisena, you are a poet; come to Girinagar once with a poem, I will acquaint you with the generosity of the Kshatrapas.

Harisena: (smiling sweetly) Mahakshatrapa, please tell us what you want.

[Rudrasena hops over to Harisena and stands akimbo in front of him.]

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Rudrasena: Shall I tell you? Evacuate Anarta and Malwa.

Ramagupta: (to himself) Where is the choice?

Harisena: Then?

Rudrasena: Return Ujjeni. I will pull it down.

Harisena: Oh no! That's too much.

Rudrasena: (angrily) Have I come here to bargain? One thousand chariots, one thousand elephants...

Harisena: Oh no, oh no!

Rudrasena: Oh no? Why are you scared? Five thousand horses and ten thousand *dinars*.[5]

Ramagupta: (contemptuously, to himself) Go on, go on, if you don't exact everything today, when else would you?

Harisena: Oh, but Mahakshatrapa, how can this be possible? Where can we get all these? Please listen to me.

Rudrasena: (stopping, impatiently) I am listening. What do you want to say? Be quick. (with a fierce voice) If you do not give me as I demand, I will destroy Ujjayini tomorrow and massacre you all.

Harisena: Mahakshatrapa, please abide by the code of behavior of a victorious king. Offer such terms that may be considered acceptable. We have fought for a long time and are exhausted. Now, let us evolve something that may establish friendly relations between Pataliputra and Girinagar.

Rudrasena: (smiling) Why, do you have a proposal of marriage for your princess?

[5] *Dinar*, the gold coin. "The foreign Kushana name of dinar suggested by the Roman *denarious aureus* was also applied to Gupta coinage." R. K. Mookerji, p. 31.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

The chamberlain: (off stage) Your Excellency, this way, my Lady, this way.

[Dhruvadevi, downcast but lustrous and attractive, descends half way down the stairs and stands near the banisters. She looks like a statue in alabaster because of her grief and pride, but her eyes reflect alertness. Self-confident, she looks at Ramagupta and Rudrasena. Rudrasena and other Shakas stare at this beauty and luster. Rudrasena even forgets to close his open mouth as he keeps gaping.]

Dhruvadevi: What is happening here, Harisena?

Harisena: My Lady, Mahakshatrapa is acquainting us with the terms of the treaty.

Rudrasena: (a little shaken up, he tries to soften his harsh voice as much as he possibly can) Yes. I am Mahakshatrapa Rudrasena. (once again he stares at Dhruvadevi).

Harisena: Best among heroes, Mahakshatrapa, you have demanded too much. We cannot give all that, please reconsider your proposal.

Dhruvadevi: Harisena, where is Maharaj Chandragupta?

[Hearing Dhruvadevi's voice, Rudrasena turns and stares at her.]

Harisena: Your Excellency, he must be on his way here. Mahakshatrapa, please give a thought to this.

Rudrasena: (experiencing speech-confusion) Whatever I asked for is final. Evacuate Ujjeni, destroy Anarta.

Harisena: (pleading) General, please persuade Mahakshatrapa.

Ramagupta: (with contempt) What can Undan say in this? Rudrasena, let me tell you, cut it short. Let us live, and you stop chasing us for twenty years, this is all we want.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Tell us what you will take. I just want to return to Kusumpura.

Rudrasena: (looking insolently at Dhruvadevi, to Ramagupta) You merely desire an easy life, don't you?

Ramagupta: (bored) Yes, my dear man, yes; just stop harassing us.

Harisena: (interrupting) Deva, please be gracious to me, let me talk; you cannot handle this.

Rudrasena: (wetting his lips with his tongue and with glitter in his eyes) Ramagupta, you merely want an easy life, don't you? Well, I will leave you alone as long as you live. You keep your Ujjeni, and if you like, even Malwa.

[Everybody is startled.]

Harisena: (surprised) What?

Jayadamana: (amazed) Mahakshatrapa, what is this?

Rudrasena: Yes, I don't want even one horse, nor a *dinar*.

Ramagupta: (sitting straight, getting interested) Then speak up, what do you want?

Rudrasena: Tonight, I will march off to Surashtra, will give up Ujjeni, but I want...

Harisena: (impatiently) What?

Rudrasena: (pointing) This... give me this damsel. (points at Dhruvadevi).

Harisena: (biting his lips)
Undan: (rushing forward) } What did you say?

[Dhruvadevi stands upright with fiery looks in her eyes.]

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Rudrasena: (laughing) Don't get alarmed. Jayadamana, first disarm Undan, place two or three men near each of them.

[The Shaka soldiers take their positions as ordered, Jayadamana approaches Undan.]

Undan: (with ferocious looks, roars) Who is uttering these words, the devotee of Lord Shiva from Surashtra? Why did your tongue not get burnt when you spoke thus? (two Shaka soldiers try to grab him, but he pushes them away) We are still alive, not dead.

Ramagupta: (sitting straight) Undan, calm down. We are alive and we want to remain so; that's why all this hassle. Give away your sword, come on. Let us sit down and consider this together.

[All Magadhans look at him in anger.]

Rudrasena: I won't sit down.

Ramagupta: As you please. Undan, it is my command, surrender your sword.

[Undan throws his sword on the floor. Somebody is heard approaching. Chandragupta enters making his way through the Shakas near the door; three or four Shakas surround him as he enters.]

Jayadamana: (stepping forward) Maharaj, surrender your arms.

Chandragupta: (not comprehending, looks around at everybody) My weapons? What for?

Ramagupta: Chandra, give away your weapons. We are negotiating a treaty with the king of Surashtra.

[Chandragupta, annoyed, removes and surrenders his weapons. Rudrasena, standing in front of him, inspects him from top to toe.]

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Rudrasena: So, is this Chandragupta? Hey, man, your moustache is just like your father's.

[Chandragupta looks at him in quiet contempt.]

(turning to Ramagupta and Harisena) Now, tell me, do you accept my demand or not? What have you to say?

Harisena: Mahakshatrapa, how could you utter such impiety? Victory and defeat are destined for kings, but this atrocious ...

Rudrasena: Harisena, have I come here to listen to religious teachings? Send your Mahadevi with me; then eat, drink and be happy.

[Chandragupta glances at Dhruvadevi, standing at a distance and notices anger on her face.]

Chandragupta: (roaring ferociously) What did you say, Rudrasena? Send Mahadevi? Where?

[Dhruvadevi looks down, biting her lips.]

Rudrasena: Send Mahadevi with me. I shall return the whole of Malwa to you and march off tonight.

Chandragupta: (tries to rush toward him, but the Shakas hold him back) You wicked man, you desire the Mahadevi of the Gupta family?

Rudrasena: (placing his hand on his sword) Yes, I demand her, and you will have to send her.

Chandragupta: (to Dhruvadevi) Mahadevi, why do you remain here? Go back to your inner quarters. We are here to preserve the honor of the Mahadevi. Please, go.

Dhruvadevi: Maharaj, please do not worry. I am unafraid.

Chandragupta: (struggling with the soldiers holding him)

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Kshatrapa, you, blinded by passion, intoxicated by victory, you covet our Mahadevi? You want to tarnish the supremely resplendent glory of Parakramadeva? What do you mean? If we know how to live, don't we know how to die? Harisena, minister of war and peace, tell this wicked man to get out of here and do whatever he may.

Rudrasena: (laughing loudly) Hey, boy! Calm down, will you? ...Why should I get out? Before that, shouldn't I kill you all and kidnap Dhruvadevi?

Chandragupta: (looks at Dhruvadevi. She responds with a significant smile) Rudrasena, she is not a Shaka woman, she is a brilliant crown jewel of Aryan womanhood. Kidnap her if you dare. We might die protecting her, but this *Rajalakshmi* of ours will also accompany us to the other world.

Ramagupta: (raising his hand) Rudrasena, Chandragupta, you people are talking like naive children. Chandra, you listen, you are childish. Don't talk foolishly. We retain Malwa, we preserve our army, and we can return to Pataliputra without any problem.

Chandragupta: (howling at Ramagupta) What? You too?...

Ramagupta: (to Shaka soldiers) Hold him tight; he is a trifle too strong. Chandra, what is the difference, whether Mahadevi lives here or in Surashtra?

[Chandragupta clenches his teeth. Magadhan heroes bite their tongues. Shaka soldiers laugh aloud.]

Dhruvadevi: (stepping back, taking support of the wall, but with dignity) Maharaj, the son of Pandu had to give up his wife to fulfill a promise;[6] but this precious gem of Parakramadeva's family gives away his wife to another man of his own free will!

[6] 'The son of Pandu' refers to Yudhisthira in the *Mahabharata*, who lost everything in gambling, including his wife, to his cousins, the Kauravas.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Rudrasena: (to himself) What a woman! She is indeed something! Even the kingdom of the entire world is nothing before her.

Chandragupta: (rushing toward Ramagupta) You vile butcher, doesn't your tongue perish uttering such despicable words? (looking at Undan, Rohal, and Harisena) Friends, heroes, how can you tolerate this?

Undan: (keeping his head bent low) What can I do?

Harisena: (closing his eyes) God, may this sin be quelled!

Rudrasena: (laughing) Ha, ha, who should I listen to? The husband or the servants?

Undan: Mahakshatrapa, we have fought wars of righteousness, not of sins. You have never relinquished dignity nor have I; and after all these years, why this?

Rudrasena: Undan, where is the sin in this? Your Deva does not want this damsel and I do, then why not send her with me? We all will be happy.

Chandragupta: (howling) Shut up, you lecher!

Jayadamana: (folding his hands, softly) Mahakshatrapa, what are you doing? What are you saying?

Rudrasena: (rudely) Who wants your opinion?

Harisena: Mahakshatrapa, give up this proposal and ask for something else.

Rudrasena: (firmly) What else? Nothing else. Within three hours either Dhruvadevi is delivered to my camp, or you all will be massacred.

Harisena: Then Mahakshatrapa, here is my head.

Undan: (bowing his head) I too am ready.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

[Chandragupta pulls his hair with both hands.]

Ramagupta: You all may be ready, I am not. I want to live. Let Dhruvadevi grace Surashtra. Rudrasena, take her and enjoy her, if you can.

Rudrasena: (laughing) Chandragupta, did you hear that? What do you say now?

Chandragupta: (pressing his lips) I am wondering who is destined to die at this moment! (looks down for a while and then smiling, he looks up) Remember this, oh king of the Shakas, the Mahadevi of the Guptas is not merely a protective mother goddess of the world, she is also the angry destroyer of the three worlds.[7]

Rudrasena: Why do you worry about that?

Chandragupta: (coming to a decision) All right then. May you suffer your deeds, you king of the Shakas.

[Ramagupta laughs aloud.]

Dhruvadevi: (with unbearable pain looks at Chandragupta reprimandingly, in a depressed voice) Maharaj! You too ... Now which Vishnu, the wielder of the chakra[8], should I remember?

Chandragupta: (looking at Dhruvadevi with dedicated and sad eyes, and in a triumphant voice) My Lady, yes, I too. Rudrasena is attracted by the destroyer goddess. Come on, get ready. Harisena, you too come along; let us prepare Mahadevi.

Rudrasena: (laughing) Now, this is something. Jayadamana, are there guards on the other side?

[7] Munshi uses two words *Jagadamba* and *Chandi* in this sentence. *Jagadamba* refers to the benevolent aspect of the goddess, popularly known as *Amba*. The destroyer aspect is often represented by *Chandi*. She is shakti. The two aspects correspond to Shiva's dual phases, grace and destruction.

[8] *Chakradhara*, lit. 'the wielder of Chakra' — i.e. Vishnu. Munshi uses the Vaishnava terms that are found in Gupta inscriptions, coins, etc. Some other terms used were *Chakrabhrita, Garudadhvaja* — Mookerji, p. 185.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Jayadamana: Yes, my gracious Lord.

Rudrasena: In that case, you may leave with pleasure.

Ramagupta: (with contempt) Chandra, go, go ahead, have a talk with her. Once she goes to Surashtra, you won't get another chance.

[With hatred in his eyes, Chandragupta walks up the stairs and goes out. Harisena and Mahadevi slowly follow him.]

Rudrasena: (stroking his beard and passionately watching Dhruvadevi as she walks out) She is some wench!

Ramagupta: Only to look at (laughs).

Undan: (sorrowfully, but firmly) Oh king, our Mahadevi is much more to us than the goddess of prosperity. If you like, kill us, but do not use insulting language.

Ramagupta: (joking) Oh, come, why are you impatient?

Undan: (proudly) I am tired of listening to your degenerate words; I can't tolerate this any more. I am serving you today only because of your father whom I served for fifty years; but this is the limit. I never imagined there could be anything worse than a defeat, but I actually see it today. Should I still be alive after this day, I will resign from your service.

Ramagupta: Splendid. All this mess is created by warriors like you.

Rudrasena: (laughing) Ha, ha, did you hear that, Jayadamana? You old fogey, Undan, did you hear that? Your master does not care for you. Come with me. Heroic warriors like you should be gracing my court.

Undan: (proudly) I do not serve anybody else but a Maha-bhagavata. Mahakshatrapa, it seems the meritorious

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

deeds of the Mahabhagavatas have been exhausted. Tomorrow I shall go to Varanasi and dedicate my life to Lord Vishnu; and I shall always pray that the Lord should take me from this world before the glory of Parakramadeva is tarnished charcoal-black.

[Harisena returns and approaches Rudrasena. Everybody looks at him eagerly.]

Rudrasena: So, Harisena, is the Mahadevi ready?

Harisena: (sweetly) Mahakshatrapa, the Mahadevi of Magadha requests you to relinquish this demand that might blemish the glory of the Aryan land. She, who has never asked favors from anybody, entreats you. Kingdoms are won and lost, victories are gained and lost, but the blemishes on one's glory remain for ever. Mahadevi pleads with you.

Rudrasena: Harisena, what did Parakramadeva leave undone?

Harisena: That great king never abondoned *dharma* in gaining a victory, nor did he relinquish *dharma* after gaining it.

Ramagupta: Harisena, why do you moan thus? Such a small peck of stain will not even show in the super resplendence of Parakramadeva's glory.

[Rudrasena and other Shakas burst into laughter.]

Undan: (authoritatively) Will you keep quiet?

Ramagupta: What for, my man? Who is the master, you or I? Rudrasena, go take her, and have a nice time. Don't come complaining, if you repent (eats a betel leaf).

Harisena: Mahakshatrapa, this is not a matter of polity,[9] it per-

[9] *Rajaniti*, the science of politics pertaining to administration of the country and conduct of the kings.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

tains to *dharma*. Polity is ephemeral, *dharma* is eternal. The *Smritis*[10] mandate capital punishment for union with somebody else's wife. You, the descendent of Rudradamana, the protector of the holy cow and the brahmin, would you abandon *dharma*?

Jayadamana: (to Rudrasena) Gracious Lord, this matter...

Rudrasena: (to Jayadamana) Keep quiet! (to Harisena) It is good that we do not have such *Smritis* in our land. Even so, since when is marrying the consort of a defeated king considered a sin? (hops and comes closer) Harisena, how long do you wish to carry on this wrangle? I and my soldiers are now tired. Send Dhruvadevi or else ... (snaps his fingers).

Harisena: Mahakshatrapa, would you remain persistent?

Rudrasena: Do you want to carry out my orders or not?

Harisena: (with dignity) Then, Rudrasena, you may do what no Aryan king has ever done; you may blemish the resplendent glory of the Aryan land. But remember this, the Mahadevi of the valiant Shrigupta family is purer than even Indrani[11] and should be touched by none. You will invite your destruction, and also of your Shakas, by committing the horrible sin of touching her.[12]

Rudrasena: (laughs, holding his beard) Are you trying to scare me, Harisena? My good man, just send your Mahadevi, so, as your Deva says, everybody will be happy. Here, your Ramagupta does not value her. In my Surashtra, there will be thousands to carry out the wishes of that *Devi* of the Mahakshatrapa.

Ramagupta: Is this squabble ever going to end?

[10] *Smriti*, lit. 'remembered,' a class of religious literature comprising law books, epics, and the Puranas. *Manu-Smriti* was the first among many, dated 2nd or 3rd c. A. D., Basham, p. 112.

[11] Indrani, wife of Indra, the chief of gods, the head of the Aryan host.

[12] *Sparsha*, 'touch' also means a 'sexual union'.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Harisena: (firmly) All right. Rudrasena, do as you please. Within three hours, I shall escort Mahadevi with her maids to your camp. But you will have to adhere to your promise of leaving this place immediately.

Undan: (feeling the pain) Harisena!

Harisena: General, please be calm. Destiny knows best what is in store. (to Rudrasena) So, what do you say?

Rudrasena: Yes, I will abide by my word. Fetch your Mahadevi, I will be waiting for her. The moment she arrives, we shall leave.

Harisena: (bowing to him) Mahakshatrapa, you may leave now. Do not blame us, if you suffer by your own doings.

Rudrasena: Let us go, Jayadamana. Harisena, don't forget. If the Mahadevi does not arrive, you will have to be ready for the other world by sunset.

Harisena: (pressing his lips) Do not worry, Mahakshatrapa. You may be ready for the journey. (Rudrasena leaves with the Shaka soldiers. Harisena sighs) Ramagupta, oh you blemish of the Gupta family! My life, my polity, my training, my heritage, everything stands wasted today. In order to obey you, I am doing what even a butcher would not. I am following your command for the last time today, never again.

Ramagupta: Harisena, what do I need anybody for from today onwards? I am leaving for Kusumpura today itself (gets up to go).

Harisena: (bitterly) Yes, you may leave. Today, in a split second you have uprooted *dharma* which Acharyadeva and Parakramadeva took fifty years to establish. So be it. May you depart.

Undan: Harisena, what shall we do now?

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Harisena: We may lose everything; but how can we allow Parakramadeva's glory to perish while we are still alive? Call all your captains, I am coming back to confer with you. (goes out)

Ramagupta: Let us go too, Madhurika. Let us prepare to go back to Magadha. (looking at the annoyed faces of Undan and Rohal) Today, could you possibly have the courage to say 'Victory to you, Deva?' (laughs) Come on, girls (leaves with attendant maids).

Undan: (walks up and down for a while) Oh Lord Chakradhara, why did you keep me alive to witness all this? (sighs) Parakramadeva, oh the best among the valorous ones, when we fought a thousand battles together, annihilated hundreds of battalions, conquered territories and donated them, did you ever realize that within two days, all your aspirations, ambitions and glory would thus be destroyed? My Lord, why did you not take me with you? Today, everything of yours is lost; and with that, is gone our glory. We are robbed of our ancestral *dharma*. Alas. was I destined to witness all this?

Rohal: And that too without being able to utter a word! That shameless impudent, who lost all honor, kingdom and wife, does not care at all.

Undan: (irately) No, he does not. (sadly) Rohal, my son, how different can one man be from the other! What we could never imagine in the life-time of the father, we are experiencing during the life of his son. The Mahadevi of Magadha is given away just like that! (clenches his teeth) We, the pillars of *Dharmarajya*,[13] do nothing but watch! (wipes his tears) Rohal, we were great due to one mahatma,[14] today without him we are meaningless. (thoughtfully) Are we not partners in this kingdom? Is it not built by our blood and sweat? Thousands of my poor soldiers lost their lives for it.

[13] Lit. 'righteous kingdom.' The reference is to the administration of the kingdom based on *Smritis*. The term *dharma* cannot be adequately translated as 'religious' here. [14] lit. 'the great soul', refers to Samudragupta.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

[Both stand quietly with heads bent low. Four captains enter quickly and bow to Undan.]

Captains: Victory to the General!

Undan: (sadly) May you live long, sons.

First Captain: General, what is this we hear? Our Mahadevi at the Shaka king's?

Undan: (sadly) What you hear is true. My dear son, yesterday we were defeated and we lost Ujjayini; today, we are stigmatized; we have lost our honor and *dharma*. (shaking his head, and yelling) The Shaka king took away our Mahadevi right from under our nose (clenching his teeth) and we kept watching.

Second Captain: (excitedly) But you—why did you let him? The Mahadevi of the Gupta family—

First Captain: Can nothing be done now? Do something.

Undan: (bitterly) Ramagupta gave away our lady of his own free will.

Both Captains: What?!

Undan: Son, today we saw a Mahabhagavata perform a deed that even an animal would not. Ask Rohal. Yesterday we lost the battle on account of that coward; today we have to go through this. Why did Dattadevi and Acharyadeva decide to give him the sceptre?[15]

Rohal: General, revered guru, please do not shed tears. What should be done now? What would Parakramadeva have done? Should we do something or just sit tight?

[15] R. C. Majumdar refers to not an unlikely theory that Chandragupta "was chosen out of many sons by his father to succeed him." Majumdar and Altekar, p. 165. Munshi makes the guru and the mother choose Ramagupta, the elder son, to succeed Samudragupta.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Undan: (bitterly) If Parakramadeva were alive, the Shaka king would have been hiding and trembling in the caves of Girnar.

Rohal: General, what is done is done; but what about us? Despite being robbed of *dharma,* should we continue to serve this annihilator of the family?

Both Captains: True, why should we?

Third Captain: I am not prepared to serve such a cowardly master.

Rohal: We still have time. Why do we not correct the mistake of Bhagavati and Acharyadeva? Honor and kingdom are built on our efforts too, as *gurudeva* just said. Let us give the sceptre to Maharaj Chandragupta and attack the Shakas according to his directions. Even if we died, it would be a worthy death.

Undan: (softly) It is true. Chandragupta alone is capable of preserving his father's glory. But sons, that is a different matter; where is the question of preserving the glory? It is already burnt and reduced to ashes. When Harisena has gone to give away Mahadevi, with what face do we remain alive and talk about glory? (sadly shaking his head) There is only one reality: Our glory is lost, *dharma* is gone, and how come we are still alive. The Mahadevi of Magadha is in somebody else's hand; why should we now stay alive?

First Captain: How would we show our face in Kusumpura?

Undan: What will Dattadevi and Acharyadeva say?

Third Captain: But then what do we do?

Rohal: (impatiently) What do we do? Die! It is better to be burnt along with the sacrifice of glory than live without it.

Undan: Rohal is right. You all are young, I am old. I do

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

not want to see this blemish. I am getting armed to attack the Kshatrapas (gets up).

Rohal: You cannot go alone. I will also go with you.

Undan: (enthused) Let us take all those who are prepared to go. Before the Shaka king dishonors Mahadevi, let us kill him or get killed. Who else is going with me?

Rohal: Splendid, General, let's go. Even if we — the pillars of the Guptas — fall, it will be in pursuit of victory.

Undan: And the whole world will say, we preferred dying to dishonorable living.

Rohal: You are Kartikeya incarnate!

Captains: We are also ready.

Undan: Then sons, you get going. Inquire of the warriors, who among them is ready to go and prove that we are indefatigable. Together we have played with death for the entire life; who is prepared to embrace it today? Go, and come back soon, I will be waiting.

First Captain: We are going right away. But where is Maharaj?

Undan: He is in the inner quarters, he will soon be here. You go. Be victorious. (Captains leave. Undan sits down and stares at the floor) In three hours we will lead a surprise attack and welcome a hero's death; and by night, we will be in the land of our fathers.[16]... Parakramadeva will be happy. And this boy!! Oh Lord Vishnu, is he really the son of Parakramadeva and Dattadevi?! It is better to die childless than to have such a son ... What father! Such mother! Such wife! Such brother! And look at him...! Strange are the ways of destiny!

[16] *Pitruloka*, the world of the fathers where the souls of the dead retire.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Rohal: What will happen to Ramagupta?

Undan: He will die the death he deserves. A drunkard will break his head, a dog will bite his cage. . . .

Dhruvadevi: (enters running, confused, with loose hair, perturbed looks, and screams) Undan, General!

Undan:
Rohal: } My Lady, you? Here?

Dhruvadevi: (perplexed) Yes, me. Undan, what are you waiting for? Do something, rush, rescue Maharaj!

Undan: (running to her) But how come you are here? What is the matter? What happened?

Dhruvadevi: (hastily) Maharaj did not let me go; along with your son Amrakardam and twenty other warriors, he has gone in woman's disguise escorted by Harisena to the Shaka king. Go rescue him.

Undan: (surprised) Maharaj went in a woman's guise to save you?

Dhruvadevi: (sobbing) He saved me, saved the glory of the Guptas, but at the cost of his life! Do something, General, go!

Undan: (proudly) Blessed be Maharaj. Parakramadeva is reborn in him.

Dhruvadevi: (impatiently) Yes, but do something. That beast will kill him when he recognizes him. It is a matter of hours. (putting her hands on her eyes) If he dies, the entire world will be engulfed by darkness.

Undan: (excited) My Lady, it will not. With the Sun like Maharaj, how can there be any darkness? My Lady, we are leaving. Good deeds and *dharma* of the Mahabhaga-

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

vatas will come to our rescue. Rohal, blow your conch, call the Captains. Maharaj, my Maharaj, my child master has gone to the enemy camp all alone to kill the Kshatrapa, and we are also going. Blow the conch. (Rohal blows the conch) We are going. Your Excellency, we will bring back that glorious flag-staff of the Guptas, or will die.

Dhruvadevi: Take me with you.

Undan: No, my Lady, this is not for you.

Dhruvadevi: I want to die before he does.

Undan: If you are safe, he will be saved. This is not the time to insist on that. Deva's bodyguards are here, they will protect you. Otherwise, we all are dependent on Lord *Garudadhwaja* (Vishnu). (Captains enter running) Come, come my heroes, warriors, did you hear this? The Shaka king left us alive in return for Mahadevi. Instead of Mahadevi, Maharaj has gone to the Shaka king, disguised as a woman. Rohal and I are going to his rescue. Who among you is going with us? Speak up. Cowards need not come, those who love life need not come, I need valiant men. Tell me, who is coming?

Everybody: All, all.

Undan: Sons, you have in your hands Maharaj's life, Parakramadeva's glory and Acharyadeva's *dharma*. Dear sons, let us bring him back. Say, Victory to Parakramadeva! Where be *dharma*, there be victory.

Everybody: Victory to Parakramadeva! Where be *dharma*, there be victory.

[All warriors leave.]

Dhruvadevi: Gone, everybody is gone. Till they come back.. how can I wait till then? There is only one hero among all men, only one man. What will happen to him? What must be happening in the camp?

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

[A few hours seem to pass in thoughts. Darkness gradually descends on the stage. A maid comes and lights two wall lamps. The scene seems to halt for a moment. The time passes. After a while, intoxicated Ramagupta enters hicupping. A drunk girl staggers behind him. She carries a feather brush and giggles alone as she swings it. Ramagupta looks around. Again a cry of 'Victory to Parakramadeva' is heard at a distance.]

Ramagupta: (surprised) V.. V.. Victory to Parakramadeva?! Fools! Idiots! I am sick and tired of this slogan. Some people harass you when alive, some do after they are dead. Parakramadeva keeps harassing, alive and dead. (sits) Malika, sit down. Let us prepare to go to Kusumpura. There... there we will enjoy cool breeze and the moon-chambers. In this cursed land there is nothing but heat and dust... hunger and corpses... and cries of 'Victory to Parakramadeva' and 'Where be *dharma*, there be victory.'...

[He dozes. Malika, waving the brush, lies down on the floor and falls asleep. It is night. Several hours pass. With a worried face Dhruvadevi enters.[17]]

Dhruvadevi: (to herself) The time does not pass. What must have happened? Why such a delay? Why are there no messages? What could be happening to Maharaj?

Ramagupta: (suddenly wakes up, is surprised and rubs his eyes) Who is that? Madhurika? No? (rubs his eyes again, surprised) Who, Dhruvadevi? Who is it? Mahadevi? (shuts his eyes tightly) Even in dreams it is she again. Couldn't be. The Shaka king took her. (opens his eyes again, amazed, he sits up as he rubs his eyes) Who is it, Dhruvadevi? (gets up, staggers) Devi? (Dhruvadevi is surprised seeing him behind her) How did you come back? I gave you away. I don't need you. (rubs his eyes) Dhruvadevi, Dhruvadevi, Dhruvadevi.

[17] Her exit at the end of her last speech is not mentioned in the Text.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Dhruvadevi: (harshly) What is it?

Ramagupta: Where did you come from? Go away.

Dhruvadevi: (sighs, putting her hand on her head) I never went.

Ramagupta: (with his eyes wide open) Never went? What happened? The Shaka king did not take you? Is the treaty not finalized? Can't I go to Kusumpura? Tell me, tell me. (tries to hold her hand, she roughly pushes him away) Can't I go?

Dhruvadevi: (with disgust) You may go, if you like.

Ramagupta: Why didn't you go with the Shaka king? What happened to you?

Dhruvadevi: (irritated) Whatever had to happen, happened. Why do you bother me?

Ramagupta: (shaking his head in a ridiculous way) Where is that Chandra? Tell me.

Dhruvadevi: (bitterly) He has gone to preserve your glory — at the Shaka king's.

Ramagupta: At the Shaka king's? Why? For the treaty? (Dhruvadevi starts to go, he holds her hand, she pushes it away again) Did he go to him to negotiate peace?

Dhruvadevi: In my place, in a woman's guise.

Ramagupta: (laughing) Ha-ha-ha! Now I understand. Ha-ha-ha, now I follow. That's why you have pulled a long face. That was a good trick. He went in your place!

Dhruvadevi: (restlessly) Oh Lord Lakshmipati (Vishnu)![18]

[18] Lit. 'The Lord of Lakshmi.'

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Ramagupta: (laughs to himself) Oh yes, I follow ... Ha-ha-ha. Dhruvadevi, he has gone; come on then, you be ready. I am going to Pataliputra and will take you along.

Dhruvadevi: I am not moving from here.

Ramagupta: I follow, Ha-ha-ha. You want to wait for Chandra. All right. Do you think that Kshatrapa will leave him? Get ready, come on (walks out hiccuping).

Dhruvadevi: (looks at him with hatred, to herself) Oh God, why has no one returned so far? What is going to happen? (strikes her head) Oh Lord of Lords, Chakrabhrita! Please guide him. May the meritorious deeds of his ancestors and mine help him. Oh God, take away my years of life, if you like, but let him live long.

[Sits down and falls to the floor, weeping. An hour or so passes. Madhavi and Kalidasa enter, looking worried. Kalidasa is injured on head and feet. He limps in, taking support of Madhavi's shoulder. It is evident that forgetting his poetry, he too had taken up arms.]

Madhavi: (holding Kalidasa's hand) Darling, what will happen? I am out of my mind.

Kalidasa: My dear, the present is dark as the moonless night. I cannot perceive anything; cannot imagine what will happen next. Everybody from Ujjayini, except the weak like you and me, has marched off to the enemy territory.

Madhavi: (sighs) Oh Bholanath, what will happen?

Kalidasa: My love, either my friend will die an untimely death and Magadha's *Dharmarajya* will smoulder, or the war with the Shakas will continue, resulting in more bloodshed. Whatever is destined will happen, but we are not likely to be at ease to serve the goddess of speech.

Madhavi: Suppose the Shakas attack us right now as we sit here?

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Kalidasa: Sweetheart, I am not strong enough to defend, nor am I coward enough to surrender. Just as a lotus blooms because of the Sun, we flourish because of the glory of the Shriguptas. When that Sun sets, we will fold in.

Madhavi: It would have been better if we had not come here.

Kalidasa: They say, it is better to experience life than to exist passively. At least we saw the last flame of the extinguishing lamp of Magadha's valor.

Madhavi: And we also witnessed the vileness of that rotten degenerate.

Kalidasa: And we saw the splendour of two valorous souls like simultaneous lightnings in different directions.

Madhavi: Of Maharaj and my Lady.

Kalidasa: (sadly) I wish destiny had fated better. . . .

Madhavi: Oh, that rotten destiny! She uprooted Magadha Incidentally, has he gone?

Kalidasa: There he is, enjoying himself. Of course, he needs someone to escort him! My love, should something happen to Maharaj, I will not live in Magadha.

Madhavi: If we leave this place in safety, I shall offer one million and a quarter *bilis*[19] to Lord Shiva. (the sound of people approaching and horses trotting is heard. Scared) What is that? Have the Shakas arrived? Where could we go?

Kalidasa: (gets up and limps over to the window) Look, there are torches approaching. An army is marching this way, with cries of victory. We are finished! (looks perplexed. A clear cry is heard: 'Victory to Parakramadeva') What? Did you hear that? We won! My love,

[19] *Bili*, the name of leaves used in the worship of Lord Shiva.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

(embraces Madhavi) Look, listen. That is Undan's voice. (the voice is heard — 'Victory to Chandragupta') Oh my sweet girl, Maharaj has returned — we have won. You wait here, I will bring him (he goes out limping with his stick. The victory cry is heard closer).

Dhruvadevi: (suddenly wakes up and listens carefully, raising her head) What happened? Who is that? What noise is that? Madhavi, has Maharaj returned?

Madhavi: (runs to her) Your Excellency, do not worry. It seems that Maharaj and Undan have returned after defeating the Shaka king.

Dhruvadevi: (delighted, swiftly runs to the window) Yes, here is Maharaj himself. Look Madhavi, where be *dharma,* there be victory!

[Both look out of the window eagerly. Guhasena enters and approaches them. He is a huge, handsome, sweet-faced, and sleekly dressed warrior. He is all smiles as he approaches Dhruvadevi.]

Guhasena: Victory to your Excellency! Deva commands that you must go with him to Magadha (smiles and waits with folded hands).

Dhruvadevi: (looking harshly at him) Now? I am not going.

Guhasena: (smiles again, bends with folded hands) Mahadevi, it is Deva's command.

Dhruvadevi: (turns her back contemptuously) Look, Madhavi, Maharaj is now near the palace. ... He is about to dismount. Look at all those victorious and overjoyed warriors who surround him! (turning to Guhasena in anger) You go away, why are you still here?

Guhasena: (smiling, with folded hands) Deva commands that I should take you (softly) by any means.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Dhruvadevi: Move away, I am not going. (turns toward the window) Madhavi, he has dismounted and is now coming up the steps.

Guhasena: (smiling) Your Excellency, are you not coming?

Dhruvadevi: (delighted) He is here, Madhavi.

Guhasena: Deva's command ...

[Putting his hand on Dhruvadevi's mouth, he lifts her up. Dhruvadevi struggles, but Guhasena is too strong for her.]

Madhavi: (grabs Guhasena) You, wait, you wicked, where do you think, you are going?

[Madhavi tries to cling to Guhasena, but he pushes her off. She stumbles. Guhasena carries Dhruvadevi away. Voices of victorious warriors are heard from the front hall.]

Rohal: (off stage) Victory to Maharaj!

Chandragupta: (off stage, in a trembling and cracked voice) Heroes, warriors, Victory to Parakramadeva! Victory to Mahadevi! Go and kill every Shaka. Where be *dharma*, there be victory.

Warriors: (off stage) Victory to Maharaj! Where be *dharma*, there be victory!

Undan: (off stage, addresses the crowd) My valiant men, Maharaj Chandragupta, the *tilaka*[20] of the Gupta family, has killed the Shaka king. Go, comb Ujjayini of the Shakas and kill them.

Chandragupta: (off stage) Undan, give orders to the Captains. I'll inform my Lady. (rushes in exultant, he is wounded

[20] *Tilaka* means a distinguishing mark. Here it means one who adorns the family, i.e. Chandragupta.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

in several places) My Lady, my Lady! I killed the Shaka king. Where are you? (coming forward) Who is this? Madhavi? (Madhavi sits up, pressing her head) Madhavi, what happened to you? Where is my Lady? Where is everybody?

Madhavi: (in a moaning voice) Maharaj, that vile, wicked Guhasena carried away her Excellency.

Chandragupta: (with fiery eyes) Guhasena?

Madhavi: (sobbing) Yes, it was Deva's command. She is being forcefully taken to Magadha.

Kalidasa: (enters and approaches Madhavi) What happened, Madhavi?

Chandragupta: (pale and perplexed, looks around) My Lady is gone? Guhasena carried her away? (with his head cast down, stares at the floor as though in a trance. After a while, lifts his sad face and looks blankly all around with lusterless eyes) My Lady is gone! (closes his eyes and moves his hair up) Kalidasa, give me your hand ... I am wounded in many ways ... (stretches his arms and before Kalidasa can reach him, falls to the ground).

CURTAIN

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Dhruvasvaminidevi

ACT III

[*Time*: A morning about five months later.

Place: Outside Acharya Yajnavalkya's hut in the mango grove near the royal palace. Yajnavalkya, chief among yogins, consort of Maitreyi, had once flourished in the court of Janaka Videhi and had come from Mithila to Samudragupta's court. He was appointed guru by Samudragupta; the Acharya had composed the best among Smritis, the *Yajnavalkya Smriti*. He showed the path of peace and purity to the world conquered by Samudragupta. The guru made the disciple's conquests lustrous by *dharma*, and established a moral, cultural and social unity. Advised by him, Samudragupta performed a horse-sacrifice, and learned men from varied countries assembled to honor him. Because of him the ashrama, and hence Kusumpura, had emerged as the center of learning and life.

The sun is not yet hot. A brahmin, on a seat under a tree, reads a palm-leaf manuscript. Chanting of the Vedic hymns can be heard at a distance. The door of the hut is closed. An old *rishi* enters, looks at the closed door and is about to leave as Kalidasa enters from the other side.]

Kalidasa: (bowing) Who is it, Samkhyacharya?

[The brahmin (who was reading the manuscript) prostrates himself.]

Samkhyacharya: May you live long. (to Kalidasa) Kalidasa, where is Acharyadeva?

Kalidasa: (folding his hands) He must have gone to bathe. Why? Do you need his help?

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Samkhyacharya: (caressing his beard) I wish to convey my resolution to him. With my disciples I am leaving this place.

[The brahmin who was reading the manuscript leaves.]

Kalidasa: Leaving? Where? Why?

Samkhyacharya: Kalidasa, to enhance learning is now impossible in Kusumpura. What can I achieve by living here? Even my disciples cannot get sufficient alms. One or the other scholar leaves this place every day. What is the use of staying where the king does not favor learning? Tell me how can a connoisseur of beauty like you choose to live here?

Kalidasa: Acharya, learning and enjoyment of art[1] both have dried up in me. But I am helpless. How can I leave Acharyadeva?

Samkhyacharya: Will you give this message to Acharyadeva? I shall be back at noon. It is unpleasant to spend even a minute in this land. May you live long, my son.

[Kalidasa prostrates himself. The Acharya blesses him and leaves.]

Kalidasa: (to himself) When the merits of a king are exhausted, learning relinquishes the kingdom. What abominable condition of this land of learning! Within a short time, I believe, to convene a council of scholars will also become an impossibility. (sighs) And in this situation, what a fantastic idea my friend got? Lord Cupid,[2] you have reached a limit. (thinking) Is there any limit for the spirit of adventure? (sighs) It seems, like the pace of an intoxicated man my imagination too has become sluggish.

Madhavi: (coming from behind) What happened to your ima-

[1] 'taste' *rasikata*, from *rasa* (Sanskrit) 'flavor' apprehending flavor of poetry, art, etc.

[2] *pushpadhanva*, 'one whose bow is of flowers,' cupid.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

gination? Only yesterday it had wings.[3]

Kalidasa: (sadly, shaking his head) Madhavi, don't take it lightly. Maharaj has arrived here with monk Vasubandhu.[4]

Madhavi: What? Then he is finished!

Kalidasa: (softly) Speak softly.

Madhavi: (softly) But that man will take his life.

Kalidasa: I too am worried about that. It is good that he is leaving with the monk the day after. I had gone to bring him here according to Acharyadeva's instruction.

Madhavi: Why?

Kalidasa: (whispers into her ear, then) Now, you go quickly, and get Her Excellency here.

Madhavi: Aryaputra, we are running a great risk.

Kalidasa: Go, be successful. How can we refrain from doing that much in the service of Kamadeva,[5] our favorite deity?

Madhavi: All right, I am going. (leaves)

[Dattadevi, Undan, Rohal, Harisena enter.]

Harisena: (sadly) Bhagavati, we do not relish food; all our joy of victory has vanished. Today, we cannot bear to look at Maharaj, the destroyer of the Shaka, in this condition.

Undan: (sadly) My entire army has lost all hopes.

[3] Gujarati idiom, lit. 'you were galloping on horses of imagination.'

[4] Munshi notes : "Bhikshu (monk) Vasubandhu was a leading Buddhist of that time." For more details see 'History in the *DSD*' in Chapter V.

[5] See note 2.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Dattadevi: (softly, and in a voice trembling with sorrow) My son, if you all lose hopes, what about me? I gave birth to a Rahu[6] of *dharma* and glory, and another their Sun, who has now become a dumb animal! Parakramadeva's life and mine have been in vain. Whom do I share all this with? In whose name shall I cry?

Harisena: We were hopeful that Deva will be under control, out of the fear of Maharaj.

Dattadevi: (sighs) My son, no one can keep him straight. He, Guhasena, and his men do as they like. Warriors of Parakramadeva suffer incredible insults. Revered *shrotriyas* leave Magadha out of sheer disgust.

Undan: (clenching his teeth) Yes, it has reached a limit. Only yesterday I heard that Guhasena kidnapped a brahmin girl!

Dattadevi: Son, what can I do? At every step I see the annihilation of Parakramadeva's glory and Acharyadeva's authority. When your great king was alive, he had only one creed: Where be *dharma*, there be victory; and now . . .

Harisena: *Adharma* alone is victorious.

Dattadevi: Yajnavalkya, chief among yogins, desires to go to Varanasi with his disciples.

Undan: So the remaining fear (of the yogin's authority) will also vanish.

Dattadevi: My dear, this great man's words are the foundation of our glory; with him will vanish *dharma*, everything will vanish; and so will I.

[6] Rahu, the name of a planet (*graha*) referring to the ascending nodes of the moon. According to Indian mythology, Rahu took some portion of *Amrita* (nectar) at the churning of the ocean (*samudra manthana*) by the devas and the danavas. Vishnu destroyed his body, but since he had swallowed the nectar, his head and tail survived as Rahu and Ketu; the head causes the eclipse by swallowing the planets. Basham, p. 491.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Harisena: Then what will happen to us and to this kingdom?

Dattadevi: Whatever destiny has ordained. But how can anyone tolerate such tyranny and unrighteousness?

Undan: Bhagavati, if you command, I can depose him tomorrow and put him in prison.

Dattadevi: To what purpose? It would have been different, had Chandra not gone insane. As Acharya believes, if Ramagupta were not the ruler, this kingdom would not have remained unified, even as much as it is now.

Undan: (irately) So we have to stay alive to protect Parakramadeva's kingdom and tolerate this shame! Alas!

Dattadevi: Sons, I was hopeful that Dhruvadevi would bear a son . . . but she has practically renounced the world. She is living a pious life, and is fond of learning. What else could she do? Undan, I have sent Kalidasa to fetch Chandra, so he will soon be here. Ramagupta has his eyes on him.

Undan: Rohal, go and place guards in this mango grove and the palace, in case something happens. I do not trust Guha at all.

Rohal: As you command.

[Leaves]

Dattadevi: I never ever dreamt that my Chandra would go insane like this.

Harisena: Bhagavati, ever since he killed the Shaka king, he has grown detached. He used to roam alone in the moon chamber of the palace at Ujjayini night after night. Then he found pleasures of life unpalatable, and became friendly with Vasubandhu.

Dattadevi: (wiping her tears) My son who is handsome like

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Kartikeya, will become a shaven-head!

[Sobs.]

Harisena: Even I cannot bear to see Parakramadeva's son become a monk; but Guha's wicked men are everywhere around; and when they may kill him or poison him is anybody's guess. Right now, being with Vasubandhu is the only safe way out for him.

Dattadevi: You are right, my dear, but be cautious. Ever since I got the news of his arrival, I have been having ominous premonitions.

Undan: Bhagavati, please do not worry, nothing will happen. But why did he come here?

Dattadevi: What could one say about an insane man?

Chandragupta: (off stage) Don't you hear? Don't you see? Whose horses are approaching?

Harisena: Bhagavati, Maharaj is here.

Dattadevi: (shedding tears) My beloved child!

[Chandragupta comes with Kalidasa. He is wearing a *dhoti,* has a dirty scarf on his shoulder. His hair is dishevelled and his eyes look confused.]

Chandragupta: (gesticulating crazily) Kalia, don't you hear? Who is crying? I can hear it. Who is this, Harisena? Dhruvabhuti's son? Right? Horses of Samudragupta, the destroyer of all kings, are crying.

Harisena: Maharaj, what are you saying?

Chandragupta: (whispers into his ears) Harisena, don't tell anybody ... Parakramadeva's horses are crying ... I am also crying ... The Shaka king was telling me ... (coming closer to Dattadevi) Who are you, old lady?

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Dattadevi: (weeping) Oh my son!

Chandragupta: "My son! My son!" I am the son of the horse-sacrificer Parakramadeva and Mahadevi Dattadevi; I am the grandson of Chandragupta, the king of kings, and Kumardevi ...

Dattadevi: (weeping) Chandra, my darling son!

Chandragupta: (shaking his head in dejection) Cry, go on crying ... everyone is crying, Parakramadeva's horses are also crying. Here are their tears in my hand, I have brought them with me! Everything is over. The horse-sacrificer Parakramadeva's horses keep crying. (he cries) Mother, won't they stop crying? Everything is over. Acharyadeva was also saying that ... Everything is over.

Dattadevi: Yes, my son, yes, everything is over.

Chandragupta: Mother, at the time of horse-sacrifice, Acharyadeva had commanded the horses, "Sons, keep smiling." But mother, oh mother, they cannot obey the order. They keep crying. Their tears are causing floods.

Harisena: (persuading) Maharaj, you sit and relax. Do not get excited.

Chandragupta: How can I sit? Nobody is pacifying my father's crying horses. (imploring) Could somebody go, please?

Harisena: Maharaj, please calm down. Why do you do this? I will pacify all those horses.

Chandragupta: They won't stop crying. Oh son of Dhruva bhuti, look at their tears. Here they are, they are spreading everywhere, they will drown us.

Dattadevi: My dear son, they won't drown you, don't worry.

Chandragupta: Mother, why should I worry? There is no-

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

thing to worry about. Everything is over. Your performing horse-sacrifice was futile.

Undan: (looking down) That is true.

Chandragupta: Of course, that is true. Otherwise why should the horses cry? Oh my great horses, my dear noble horses! ... Mother, please quieten them. (imploringly, folds his hands) I entreat you, please pacify them ... Look, look, these are their tears; look, they are gushing in all directions. ... Look, I am being swept off, you are being swept off, Parakramadeva is being swept off ... Grandfather and Kumardevi are being swept off ... look, look ...

Dattadevi: (to Harisena) There is wisdom even in his insane utterances. (to Chandragupta) Yes, my dear, yes, we all are being swept off, but I will hold you, my dear! (continues to cry).

Chandragupta: Gone ... swept off ... all are swept off. Cry, cry, now nothing remains but to cry.

Undan: (shakes his head) True, nothing remains but to cry.

Kalidasa: (to himself) Oh my goodness, where does he drop from?

The chamberlain: (off stage) Deva, this way, king of kings, this way.

Harisena: (to Undan) Please be on your guard.

Ramagupta: (entering) So? What are you all up to here today? Mother, be pleased.

Dattadevi: (with crying eyes) Son, may you live long!

Ramagupta: (looking contemptuously at Chandragupta) What has he started here? People say he has gone mad and is becoming a Buddhist monk. A rumour goes around that he hears Parakramadeva's horses cry.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Dattadevi: (wiping her tears) Son, your gem-like brother has now become worse than an animal.

Ramagupta: All gems turn out that way!

Chandragupta: (glares at Ramagupta, with his tongue stuck out) The horses are crying, aren't they?

Ramagupta: Mother, lock him up somewhere. I hear people get excited by his words. I don't want any trouble in Kusumpura.

Dattadevi: (bitterly) Son, why are you scared? Day after tomorrow he is leaving with Vasubandhu.

Chandragupta: (raising his head) The horses of the Shaka king have started laughing, haven't they?

[remains lying with a bent head.]

The chamberlain: (off stage) This way, your Excellency, this way, Mahadevi.

Dhruvadevi: (enters with Madhavi and bows to Dattadevi) Bhagavati, be pleased.

Dattadevi: May you live long, daughter.

Dhruvadevi: (to Ramagupta) May you be victorious, Deva.

Ramagupta: (smiling) Ho-ho-ho ...! Who, Mahadevi? You could not refrain from coming? Do you see your Kartikeya? Ha, ha! Worship him while you can; it may be useful in your next birth.

Dhruvadevi: (with cold contempt) Achyutadeva's daughter knows whom to worship.

Chandragupta: (looks up with clenched teeth at Ramagupta, as though he does not know him) Mahakshatrapa, you scoundrel, you dare desire our Mahadevi? You want to

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

stigmatize Shrigupta family? (to Ramagupta) You black sheep of the Gupta family! (glares fiercely) Why did Dattadevi not die while giving birth to you? (pants, with both his hands on the ground).

Kalidasa: (to himself) My goodness, how much does he speak? He has really gone mad.

Ramagupta: (startled, partially drawing his sword) Damn you![7]

Undan: (intervening) Deva, he is insane. He does not know what he says.

Chandragupta: (raising his head) You butcher, you degenerate, do you give away the Mahadevi of Shrigupta family to another man? Pardon me, Dhruvadevi. Did I for this purpose ...

Dhruvadevi: (becoming pale, to herself) Oh Almighty God![8]

Dattadevi: (to Ramagupta) Son, you go away from here. At this moment he is senseless and seeing you, he gets madder still.

Ramagupta: (laughing aloud) I know what he is mad after!

Chandragupta: (smiling and with folded hands) *Rajalakshmi*[9] of our family, please forgive us. Alas! Did I bring you here for this?[10]

[7] *Kamjat*, lit. 'low born', an abusive word.

[8] *Bhagavan*, 'one and only God Almighty' according to *Bhagavata dharma*.

[9] *Rajalakshmi*, 'wealth of the kingdom'.

[10] If "here" refers to Kusumpura, the reference here seems to be to a probable historical fact that Dhruvadevi was sent as a 'gift of an unmarried daughter' to Samudragupta by her father, Achyutadeva. Chandragupta had probably escorted her to Pataliputra. There seems to be discrepancy in Munshi's use of this fact that he had discarded in Act I. See the dialogue between Kalidasa and Madhavi wherein Kalidasa mentions another probable occasion when Chandragupta could have seen Dhruvadevi for the first time. For a full discussion of this, see 'History in the *DSD*,' in the previous chapter.

Alternately, "here" could mean Ujjayini, as Chandragupta, imaginatively reenacts the past episode with Rudrasena. In that case there is no discrepancy, because Chandragupta was responsible for taking Dhruvadevi to Ujjayini (Act I).

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Dattadevi: (placing her hand on Chandragupta's shoulder) My son, come with me and calm down.

Chandragupta: (moving away Dattadevi with force) No, no, never. I won't calm down. Let the Sun halt, but my Lady will not go to the Shaka king.

Harisena: (dejectedly) Bhagavati, he lives in the memory of those days. Maharaj, Her Excellency won't go. Do not worry.

Chandragupta: (proudly) We can die, but cannot let go our honor. No, no, Devi, as long as I breathe, I won't let you go. Let me kill or get killed. Harisena, if the glory of the Gupta family must end, be it so; but before that, let us enhance our effulgent splendor.

[Bends his head low. Dhruvadevi covers her eyes.]

Ramagupta: Can't understand whether he is sane or insane.

Harisena: (folding his hands) Deva, may you please return.

Chandragupta: (raising his head) Harisena, wait. I am coming. God is gracious to the righteous kingdom (*dharmarajya*) of the Mahabhagavatas. You sinful, degenerate, Shaka king, go on laughing ... your beloved is waiting for you ... yes. You want to taste my lips, don't you? Go ahead, taste it ... you won't desire to taste it again. (laughs loudly) Kshatrapa, just let me go alive from here, and then I will show you. You devil, you dare insult my Mahadevi, the fumes of your son's funeral pyres will suffocate your own Girinagar; victory bells of the Gupta family will ring in your Surashtra and Anarta. (Dhruvadevi and Dattadevi weep. Undan wipes his eyes. To Ramagupta). Do you want to embrace me? Well, come, embrace your wielder of death. (opens his arms) Harisena, Undan, ... attack ... massacre the Shakas. Victory to Parakramadeva! Victory to Mahadevi! Where be *dharma*, there be victory!

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Harisena: (sadly) This resplendence, this heroism, this learning! ... Oh destiny, why have you wasted them thus?

Ramagupta: Harisena, nothing goes wasted in the world; had he not been like this, who would have shown this drama again and again? The drama is over; and I am leaving. (laughs)

[Dattadevi covers her eyes and weeps with rage and distress. Ramagupta passes by Madhavi and pinches her on the cheek.]

Madhavi: (screams and stares angrily) Oh my goodness! Deva, you forgot. I am a brahmin girl.

[Dattadevi and Dhruvadevi look up angrily. Undan approaches Ramagupta with his hand on his sword. Harisena, with harsh look, goes and stands near Madhavi.]

Ramagupta: (laughs loudly) Madhavi! Ha, ha, ha! So what? (laughs again) A girl is a girl. Brahmin or ...

Chandragupta: (springs up from the floor and speaks in a fierce voice) Yajnavalkya, that master of asceticism, has said: Decapitation for illicit holding of a brahmin girl.[11]

[Grabs Ramagupta by his neck.]

Ramagupta: (frightened) Guhasena!

Chandragupta: Yajnavalkya, master of asceticism, has said (lifts Ramagupta and throws him out) Go ... (laughing loudly) Didn't I say: Parakramadeva's horses are perpetually crying?

[Sits down again, bends his head low.]

Dattadevi: (wipes her tears) Is this what I have to witness in the *ashrama* of Yajnavalkya, the banner of righteousness

11 *Sangrahana*, 'holding together.' Also refers to sexual union.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

and the master of asceticism?

[Presses Madhavi to her side and cries with her face against her head.]

Harisena: Bhagavati, keep courage.

Dattadevi: Son, why don't I die?

Kalidasa: Bhagavati, Maharaj is very excited. Let him sleep a little. Your Excellency, if you and Madhavi wait here for a while, I shall escort Bhagavati and return.

Dhruvadevi: Yes, I will be here. Harisena, Undan, you too may go. May you leave Bhagavati. I shall lead Maharaj to the *ashrama* and come back.

Dattadevi: Undan, get those soldiers immediately. I do not trust Guhasena at all.

Undan: Nor do I. I am placing security men on all four sides immediately. He is not out of danger in this *ashrama*. I wonder what will happen.

Chandragupta: (raising his head) You may or may not bring (it), but the great horses are still crying.

[Bends his head low. Harisena and Undan leave after bowing to Dattadevi.]

Dattadevi: Daughter, let Madhavi go with me. Right now she is all scared. Kalidasa, you remain here. I will send someone.

Kalidasa: I shall remain here, Bhagavati. There is no need for anybody else.

[Dattadevi and Madhavi leave.]

Dhruvadevi: (sadly looking at Chandragupta lying there) Kalidasa, your Maharaj in this state? What do I do? How

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

do I repair his impaired mind? Often, destiny is ruthless when she determines the future of man.

Kalidasa: Your Excellency, if destiny had delegated to me the creation of this world, I ... (remains silent) I am waiting outside. My Lady, a moment gone does not return.

[Goes out.]

Dhruvadevi: (looking intently at Chandragupta lying on the floor, in an affectionate voice) What condition you are in! And what condition am I in too! Why did Vishnu create the two of us, and if he did, why did he inflict such pain? (bends down and caresses Chandragupta's head. He raises his head. In a bemoaning voice) Maharaj, do you recognize me?

Chandragupta: (laughing, raises his head and gets up) Devi, if I had not recognized you, would I have come here pretending madness?

Dhruvadevi: (startled and delighted) Aren't you really mad?

Chandragupta: (smiling) Do I look mad? I faked madness to come to Kusumpura and meet you. Now that I have met you, I am sane again.

Dhruvadevi: (trembling) You ventured this just to meet me?

Chandragupta: (jokingly) I know well indeed for whom I am venturing what. Devi, the day after tomorrow, Vasubandhu will administer my initiation and I shall renounce the world. Would I not meet you once before renouncing the world?

Dhruvadevi: (sadly) Maharaj, why do you have to renounce the world at this age?

Chandragupta: (jokingly) Ramagupta will not leave me alone until I renounce the world. His spies follow me — to kill me, to poison me; and now I have no interest in anything.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

I want to go and bury myself somewhere.

Dhruvadevi: Why do you speak thus? You are a man. You have manly prowess. What hopes does the future not hold for you? Some day, Parakramadeva's kingdom will place the bridal garland around your neck ... some ... some frolicsome, delightful, fortunate,[12] dignified girl with serene eyes will crave to grace your home ...

Chandragupta: (with dignity) Devi, that's enough. Shall I talk frankly? Please pardon me. Should someone arrive, what I have come to tell you will remain unsaid. Do you remember that day, my Lady? On that dreadful day, having killed the Kshatrapa, I came with great enthusiasm to give you the news of victory. Guhasena had kidnapped you. The barren palace made a mockery of my joyous fervor of triumph. At that moment it dawned on me ... my courage and hope were shattered ... Devi, I lost all my strength ... I lost all passion for the world ... I was convinced no woman was created to grace my home.

Dhruvadevi: (looking down with distress) My misfortune has made you unfortunate as well. I was dead, and this way, you are also ...

Chandragupta: Dead. Yes, that is why I want to renounce the world. My Lady, I only wish that the world for me, and I for the world, remain dead!

Dhruvadevi: (folding her hands) Maharaj, please do not lose courage. For a heroic man like you there is a wide big earth lying out there.

Chandragupta: (shaking his head, with darkened face) My Lady, he who has hope can have courage. Why should I show valor now? For whom? There is darkness on all sides, I cannot find any direction of life (tears roll down his cheeks).

[12] *Kambukanthi*, 'lady having a neck like a conch shell, with three lines' — horizontal — is considered fortunate.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Dhruvadevi: (sobbing) You, born to be the supreme lord of the earth, now will go begging alms as a monk?

Chandragupta: Yes, till the end of this life. My Lady, this birth is lost in vain. We will make up for it in the next. What do you say, my dear Lady?

Dhruvadevi: (piteously) My heart is in turmoil, what can I say?

Chandragupta: (pleading) I will go away the day after tomorrow, I won't see you again in this life. My Lady, say something. Say some such thing that I can mentally keep reciting for ever. For once let yourself go, let me be carried away in the flow of your words.

Dhruvadevi: (folding her hands) Maharaj, once I begin I might say anything (even unwise). For months now, I have considered silence as my redemption. But I pray to you, think, do not be hasty in renouncing the world.

Chandragupta: Think? I am tired of thinking. For the last five months, day and night, I have done nothing but thinking. My Lady, (in a moaning voice) splendor and beauty have vanished from the world, they will not revive, no matter how . . . and I cannot survive in darkness!

Dhruvadevi: Maharaj, since you mention this, let me also tell you this. As I hear you, my heart tears apart. Today, I live all burnt up and scorched. And when you, the source of my life, my Kartikeya, will leave, how shall I continue to live even as I do now? You are right: Why live in the world that one dislikes? I shall also go to my father's and serve Lakshmipati (Vishnu).

Chandragupta: Chakradhara (Vishnu) did not allow us one year or one month, even one day, the memory of which, would enable us to live the rest of our lives. We would wander on this earth, like two lost animals; nobody would understand us, we would not try to understand anybody; away from the world, being tortured by the agony of past

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

memories ...

Dhruvadevi: (crying) And unrelieved by the hope that there will ever be an end to this pain.

Chandragupta: (piteously) My Lady, why did I not die while killing the Shaka king?

Dhruvadevi: Maharaj! Maharaj!

Kalidasa: (off stage) Maharaj!

Chandragupta: Somebody has come — (his voice chokes).

Dhruvadevi: (weeping) My Kartikeya!

[Extends her hand and places it on his head as she continues crying.]

Chandragupta: (bemoaning) My Lady!

Dhruvadevi: When shall we meet again?

Chandragupta: (shaking his head) Never!

[Enters Ramagupta. His intoxicated eyes are blood-red. Enter Guhasena, and another soldier after him.]

Ramagupta: Guhasena, here is that madcap. Grab him. So, Mahadevi, you are still here, eh? (laughs) A lot of crying and weeping seems to be going on here. Aren't you yet through with the worship of your Kartikeya?

Chandragupta: (proudly, stepping forward) What is it? Ramagupta, tell me whatever you want to. What is it?

Ramagupta: Guhasena, what are you waiting for? Kill him. Kill him in front of Mahadevi. She loves him, let her see his blood flow.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Chandragupta: (proudly looking up) Have you come to kill me? You shame of the family, you forgot the victory cry of Parakramadeva? Where be *dharma,* there be victory.

Ramagupta: Guhasena!

[Signals his command. Guhasena and his men[13] surround Chandragupta who stands daring them in the center.]

Chandragupta: You want to kill me? Come on, kill me, kill me; I am not interested in life, but wait; before I die, let me perform one last act of merit.

[Chandragupta jumps on Ramagupta and holds him by his neck. Ramagupta falls down. Chandragupta jumps on his chest and strangles him. Guhasena tries to drag Chandragupta away and kill him. Meanwhile, Undan, Harisena and other warriors enter and capture Guhasena.]

Chandragupta: (getting up from Ramagupta's dead body and laughing aloud) Horses, laugh, laugh. Meritorious deeds of Parakramadeva still persist. You uprooters of glory and *dharma,* you butchers, at last the world is free from you ... horses! Great horses! (like a mad man sits on the side).

Harisena: (bending low, examines Ramagupta) Undan, Deva is dead! (in a moment Harisena's statesmanship comes to the fore. He calmly says) Friends, do not worry. Make sure nobody knows about this. Two of you tie up Guhasena in that hut. Let two or three men keep watch lest anybody should come here. Rohal, put security men in the royal palace. Undan, protect Maharaj. King of kings Chandragupta ...

Chandragupta: No, you forgot Harisena, Parakramadeva's horses have started crying. Ha, ha, ha!

[13] Earlier stage direction mentions only one warrior following Guhasena.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

[Walks out like an insane man. Undan, Rohal and other Captains take Guhasena and his men out.]

Harisena: Kalidasa, you sit here with my Lady. I am arranging for the removal of the dead body, and going to get Acharyadeva and Bhagavati here. We all have to assemble in a short while. (leaves)

Kalidasa: (looking at Ramagupta) My Lady, here lies the son of super heroic Parakramadeva... He inherited the earth, *dharma,* glory and love — but he remained a beggar for ever. He who enrages destiny may have everything or nothing, all is the same. He knew not heroism, nor glory; he did not seek to be benevolent, nor did he perform *dharma;* he did not attain purity, nor did he cultivate virtues. Dealing in dust, in the end he retained only dust in his hands.

Dhruvadevi: Kalidasa, some are born — so that they might be remembered for ever; some die — so that they might be forgotten right away.

Kalidasa: My Lady, what will happen now?

Dhruvadevi: I am also thinking about the same thing.

[Enter Madhavi with four men.]

Madhavi: My Lady, be pleased. (to the men) Carry him into the hut. Let no one know.

Attendants: As you command.

Dhruvadevi: What is it, Madhavi?

Madhavi: My Lady, Bhagavati, Chief Minister Vatsya and Harisena have decided not to let anybody know anything. Confusion might spread in Kusumpura. They all are coming here right away.

[Madhavi and the attendants leave.]

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Chandragupta: (comes in) Don't talk, don't speak... and if you speak, let all speak. It is a matter of horses—not to be taken lightly—of Parakramadeva's horses, who crossed the Indus. My...

Dhruvadevi: Maharaj!

Chandragupta: Not your father's, my father's horses—white, black ears, long thick tail, smeared with sandal-wood paste...

Kalidasa: But Maharaj!

Chandragupta: You don't understand this matter; smeared with sandal-wood paste, decorated with flowers, the great horses of the horse-sacrifice are neighing.

Dhruvadevi: But now—

Chandragupta: Now—now only they are neighing. Their tears are drying up...

Undan: (entering) Has Acharyadeva arrived?

Chandragupta: Acharyadeva has gone.

Undan: Where to?

Chandragupta: To the horse-sacrifice.

Dhruvadevi: He is coming soon. Have you placed guards in the city?

Undan: Yes, my Lady, there is nothing to worry about. The army is controlled by the Generals. The royal palace and the treasury are well guarded. Guhasena's men are being arrested and imprisoned.

Chandragupta: (mumbles) Why are you crying, you great horses?

Dhruvadevi: Madhavi just left word that nobody from out-

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

side should know anything.

Undan: How can one prevent the news from spreading? Here comes Bhagavati and the Chief Minister.

[Enter Bhagavati Dattadevi crying. By her side is the Chief Minister Vatsya. He is a sixty-year-old, learned and lustrous brahmin. He has very small eyes, and cunningness pervades his face. Very understandably, people believe that Ramagupta's kingdom is being administered by this trustworthy minister of Parakramadeva; and that belief is apparent on everybody's face.]

Chandragupta: (laughs loudly) Ha-ha-ha. Poor old Vatsya! Ha-ha-ha.

Dhruvadevi: Bhagavati, be pleased. (Dattadevi blesses without words) Chief Minister, I pay my respects.

Vatsya: Mahadevi, may you be well.

Chandragupta: (mutters) Deva, you sit here... Dattadevi, you sit here. King, ha-ha-ha-ha—

Vatsya: Bhagavati, Maharaj seems to have gone totally insane. What has he done? He has shaken up the whole kingdom.

Dattadevi: Yes Vatsya, but what can be done now? At times he seems to regain sanity. If we keep him here, after some days he should be all right, I guess.

Vatsya: Yes, but what about now? Undan, what is the state of your army?

Undan: There is nothing to worry about my army. All my captains are trustworthy. If the local army goes out of control, it is a different matter.

Harisena: I have sent Rohal to call all local captains, but before that let us decide who should be proclaimed the

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

ruler.

Vatsya: (watching sharply) Bhagavati, who should be proclaimed the ruler? Either Maharaj, or if Bhagavati so commands, Skanda. Who else is there? He is also Parakramadeva's son.

[Skanda is the son of Parakramadeva by a wife other than the chief queen. Hearing his name, Undan and Harisena are alarmed.]

Dattadevi: (as if offended) Skanda!

Harisena: It is well known all over that Maharaj has gone insane. It could be difficult to proclaim him as the ruler.

Chandragupta: (like an insane grabs Kalidasa and tells him) Kalia, look at him! Ha-ha-ha-ha. That is Vatsya, the Chief Minister of Parakramadeva; would anybody believe it? Ha-ha-ha—

Kalidasa: Maharaj, come to your senses! What are you doing?

Chandragupta: Kalia, you fool, he can't be Vatsya. Is this the same Chief Minister whose policies were accepted by king Samudragupta; and whose word governs the world? Ha-ha-ha. It can't be. Ask him, who is he?

Kalidasa: (calling Dhruvadevi on the side, hesitantly) You please tell him not to behave insanely.

Dhruvadevi: (to Kalidasa, biting her lips) How can I say?

Chandragupta: But look at his beard! Ha-ha-ha. It resembles the tail of Parakramadeva's horse.

Dattadevi: Chandra, what are you blabbing?

Vatsya: Don't get angry. Poor boy, he is like an animal. Son, will you come with me? (Chandragupta shakes his head. To Dattadevi) Bhagavati, then what do we do?

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Chandragupta: Ha-ha-ha, shall I say? Shall I suggest? Bring the great queen Kumardevi.

[Harisena ponders.]

Vatsya: Poor boy!

Harisena: Chief Minister, there is truth in his words. Why not proclaim Dhruvadevi as the ruler, while Maharaj remains insane? Bhagavati, what is your wish?

Vatsya: (startled) Dhruvadevi?

Harisena: The great queen of the Guptas is prosperity incarnate.

Dattadevi: Harisena, that is true. Isn't it, Vatsya?

Vatsya: But it is very risky.

Dhruvadevi: (hesitantly) Bhagavati, not me.

Vatsya: Harisena, Undan, what do you think?

Undan: What does Acharyadeva say?

Harisena: I have acquainted Acharyadeva with all the facts. He must be on his way here. He has instructed me to ask Bhagavati only this question.

Vatsya: Which question?

Harisena: Who seems to be capable of governing the righteous kingdom of Parakramadeva?

Dhruvadevi: (with thumping heart) but... (looks at Chandragupta)

Chandragupta: (mutters with a smile) My dear great horses, shall I whisper something in your ear? Be patient, my dear, be patient. ...

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Harisena: Here comes Acharyadeva.

[Enter Yajnavalkya, chief among yogins, extremely old, dignified and calm—as though a living monument of the ancient *puranas*. He has finished his daily bath and prayers. He carries a water-pot in hand, his forehead is smeared with ashes. All prostrate before him as he enters.]

Yajnavalkya: Children, may you all be righteous. What have you decided?

Vatsya: Best among yogins, what is your instruction?

Yajnavalkya: It is not my instruction, but my blessing: Whoever is capable of carrying the burden of the glory and eternal *dharma* of the Gupta family be crowned. Who seems suitable to you?

Dattadevi: Acharyadeva, it is proper to entrust the sceptre to Dhruvadevi.

Yajnavalkya: Yes, she is well suited. If Chandra regains his sanity, we will see.

Dhruvadevi: (confused, folds her hands) But Acharyadeva, I am not familiar with the code of governance of a kingdom.[14]

Yajnavalkya: (smiling) These people will teach you. Acquire the unobtainable with righteousness, protect that which you obtained with diligence, increase the protected by ethical means, and offer the surplus to the deserving—do this much, and you will have mastered the code.

Harisena: (whose statesmanship is getting more and more definitive) Then Bhagavati, I should proclaim Her Ladyship as the ruling queen.

Dattadevi: Yes, Harisena, go. Proclaim her the queen.

[14] *Rajadharma*, 'conduct of a king'.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Harisena: As Acharyadeva and Bhagavati command. Victory to my Lady!

[Leaves.]

Yajnavalkya: Bhagavati, may I leave now?

Dattadevi: As Acharyadeva desires.

Yajnavalkya: Children, may you live long. (smiling) Mahadevi, maintain this earth protected by the Guptas with righteousness.

Chandragupta: Oh you old man, who appears like a preceptor, but who is not!

Yajnavalkya: That is true. (smiles) I was once a preceptor, now I am not. Bhagavati, send him to me later.

Dattadevi: Vasubandhu wishes to take him.

Yajnavalkya: No, do not let him go. I will keep him.

[Leaves.]

[Cries are heard off stage: 'Victory to Dhruvasvaminidevi!' 'Victory to Parakramadeva!' 'Where be *dharma*, there be victory!']

Chandragupta: (raising his head) Victory to Dhruvasvaminidevi! Victory to Parakramadeva's horses!

Dattadevi: Who knows where he's got this crazy idea about horses! Dhruvadevi, my daughter, be victorious. Till now, I was graced by my sons, now I am graced by you.

Dhruvadevi: Bhagavati, I live and am graced only by your blessings.

Harisena: (enters hurriedly. He is followed by a horseman) Victory to the great Queen! Bhagavati, be pleased. A new

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

problem has cropped up.

Dattadevi
Vatsya:
Undan: } What is it?

Harisena: This Captain has brought Amrakardam's message from Ujjayini. Shall I open it? (Dhruvadevi and Vatsya give their consent. Breaks the seal of the birch-tree[15] leaf) The Shaka king has struck an alliance with Pravarasena, the king of Vakataka,[16] and they are going to jointly attack Ujjayini.

Vatsya: Alas! This sort of trouble at this time! I did feel it coming.

Harisena: (worried) We cannot move the Malav army from here at this juncture.

Dattadevi: And none of us can go from here.

Undan: I can go; but the army...

Dhruvadevi: (softly) I could come.

Harisena: No, my Lady, you are needed here. (looking at Vatsya intently) Suppose tomorrow, the supporters of Skanda start some mischief? Why should this problem have arisen at this moment?

Chandragupta: (mutters) How did this problem arise? Horses, begin neighing! (looking at everybody) Who will go? Who will go? Does the Kshatrapa's son raise his arms? Go Harisena, go and tell him, I am coming. Coming—the killer of your father. Horses of Parakramadeva, you get ready. Let us begin a horse-sacrifice.

[Begins to leave.]

[15] *Bhurjapatra*, 'birch tree leaf,' used at the time for writing.
[16] Munshi notes : "In Western India, Vakatakas were getting powerful at the time."

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Undan: Maharaj! Maharaj!

Dattadevi: Chandra!

Chandragupta: Mother, my father's horses are calling me. We are leaving. Here we go. We are going to trample Surashtra. Come on, great horses!

[Trots like a horse.]

Dhruvadevi: (looks at Chandragupta, perplexed and reluctant) Bhagavati, let him go if he likes. Since Undan and Amrakardam are with him, there should be no problem. After winding up things here, I will go and reach there with Harisena.

Harisena: My Lady is right. Maharaj will feel better by going there. And it is perfectly all right if part of the Magadha army also leaves. Kalidasa, you escort Bhagavati.

Kalidasa: (Tired and defeated) Yes, I am ready. Come this way, Bhagavati.

Dattadevi: Daughter, be victorious. Children, be blessed.

[Exuent Kalidasa and Dattadevi.]

Dhruvadevi: Chief Minister, you and Harisena will take the administration of the kingdom. Undan, you make preparations for your departure.

Vatsya:
Undan:
Harisena: } As Your Ladyship commands.

[Leave.]

Dhruvadevi: (angered) Maharaj, what are you up to? Playing a joke?

Chandragupta: Ha-ha-ha-ha. Horses, neigh — my brave ones!

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Dhruvadevi: (pressing her lips) But what is all this for?

Chandragupta: Parakramadeva's horses are calling me. Coming! Coming!

[Runs out.]

Dhruvadevi: (crying aloud) Oh Lord, a while ago I was without any support, now I am the empress of the world ... but am just the same — alone ... forlorn ... unhappy!

[Places her head in her raised palms.]

CURTAIN

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Dhruvasvaminidevi

ACT IV

[*Time*: Midnight, four or five months later.

Place: A barren hall of the royal palace in Kusumpura.

Three or four torches on the wooden pegs in walls dimly light the hall.

A faint cry of 'Victory to Skandagupta!' is heard at a distance. Warriors residing in the palace are heard crying 'Victory to Dhruvasvaminidevi!' Clashing of arms and clamor are also heard for some time, and then quieten down.

Harisena is fully armored and seems to have just returned from a battle. He unties the string of his bow and tests its elasticity by supporting it on the floor. He looks worried.

Kalidasa enters from the other side; he also looks worried and downcast.]

Harisena: Kalidasa, has Her Ladyship gone to bed? Because of several sleepless nights, she has lost half her weight.

Kalidasa: (dejectedly) After a great effort, only now she could relax and sleep. Her impatience knows no bounds.

Harisena: (shaking his head in dejection) My dear, who would not be impatient? And is it surprising if that be so? The whole of Kusumpura has defected to Skandagupta's group. Food storage is running low in the royal palace, and every day someone from our side defects or is killed.

Kalidasa: Alas! We have now been imprisoned like this for

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

the last twenty-eight days.

Harisena: Blessed be Parakramadeva's foresight, that he got this sturdy palace built; otherwise long back, vultures would have formed a circular array on our bones.

Kalidasa: But Commander General,[1] what about the people defecting to Skandagupta's group every day?

Harisena: Brother, now our only hope is Undan's army. There is no news from him despite my messages for the last three months. Oh Lord Chakradhara (Vishnu)! Oh Lord Lakshmivallabha (Vishnu)! If only you had kept Chandragupta sane ...

Kalidasa: Sane or insane, if only he were here ...

Dhruvadevi: (entering) What are you two discussing?

[Dhruvadevi looks emaciated and pale. Her eyes look large and lustrous despite sleeplessness, tension and restlessness.]

Harisena: (startled) My Lady, you have hardly slept. If you do not have enough sleep, how can you sustain yourself?

Dhruvadevi: (smiling slightly and sweetly) Harisena, when you all have entrusted to me Parakramadeva's sceptre, how can I sleep? I do not feel tired of protecting the sceptre day and night.

Harisena: Only because of your inspiration, our soldiers have sustained themselves.

Dhruvadevi: My inspiration? No, no, I merely protect the glory of the Guptas and the perennial *dharma,* I am only an instrument to protect this position for Maharaj.

1 *Mahadandanayaka* 'Commander General,' this title is used for Harisena for the first time. According to history, Harisena was Chandragupta II's *Mahadandanayaka.* Munshi seems to have used this title to give him the charge of Dhruvadevi's troops.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Skandagupta may be the son of Parakramadeva, but not of Dattadevi. (smiling slightly) And even if Skanda burns down this palace, I will stand on its ashes and protect this sceptre till Dattadevi's son returns.

Kalidasa: My Lady, Maharaj will come; he most certainly will.

Dhruvadevi: I too have faith.

Harisena: If Maharaj were here, even though insane, all Kusumpura would have been on our side. Mahadevi, people are fully dedicated to Parakramadeva and Dattadevi. If Maharaj were here, they would have gone crazy after him.

Dhruvadevi: Yes, (smiling) for them I alone am the sinner.

Kalidasa: And ironically, it is you who are protecting the glory of the Guptas. Really, unfathomable are the ways of destiny!

[A clamor is heard outside the royal palace.]

Harisena: (listening) Has the enemy started attacking again or what?

Dhruvadevi: Yes, let's go.

Harisena: No, my Lady, you be here. Rohal cannot miss. He must have placed soldiers carefully. Let me go and check.

Dhruvadevi: All right, come back soon. (Harisena leaves) Kalidasa, has Bhagavati retired to bed?

Kalidasa: Yes, Shashilekha is with her.

Dhruvadevi: And Acharyadeva?

Kalidasa: He is the only one among us, fearless and invincible

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

the last twenty-eight days.

Harisena: Blessed be Parakramadeva's foresight, that he got this sturdy palace built; otherwise long back, vultures would have formed a circular array on our bones.

Kalidasa: But Commander General,[1] what about the people defecting to Skandagupta's group every day?

Harisena: Brother, now our only hope is Undan's army. There is no news from him despite my messages for the last three months. Oh Lord Chakradhara (Vishnu)! Oh Lord Lakshmivallabha (Vishnu)! If only you had kept Chandragupta sane ...

Kalidasa: Sane or insane, if only he were here ...

Dhruvadevi: (entering) What are you two discussing?

[Dhruvadevi looks emaciated and pale. Her eyes look large and lustrous despite sleeplessness, tension and restlessness.]

Harisena: (startled) My Lady, you have hardly slept. If you do not have enough sleep, how can you sustain yourself?

Dhruvadevi: (smiling slightly and sweetly) Harisena, when you all have entrusted to me Parakramadeva's sceptre, how can I sleep? I do not feel tired of protecting the sceptre day and night.

Harisena: Only because of your inspiration, our soldiers have sustained themselves.

Dhruvadevi: My inspiration? No, no, I merely protect the glory of the Guptas and the perennial *dharma*, I am only an instrument to protect this position for Maharaj.

[1] *Mahadandanayaka* 'Commander General,' this title is used for Harisena for the first time. According to history, Harisena was Chandragupta II's *Mahadandanayaka*. Munshi seems to have used this title to give him the charge of Dhruvadevi's troops.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Skandagupta may be the son of Parakramadeva, but not of Dattadevi. (smiling slightly) And even if Skanda burns down this palace, I will stand on its ashes and protect this sceptre till Dattadevi's son returns.

Kalidasa: My Lady, Maharaj will come; he most certainly will.

Dhruvadevi: I too have faith.

Harisena: If Maharaj were here, even though insane, all Kusumpura would have been on our side. Mahadevi, people are fully dedicated to Parakramadeva and Dattadevi. If Maharaj were here, they would have gone crazy after him.

Dhruvadevi: Yes, (smiling) for them I alone am the sinner.

Kalidasa: And ironically, it is you who are protecting the glory of the Guptas. Really, unfathomable are the ways of destiny!

[A clamor is heard outside the royal palace.]

Harisena: (listening) Has the enemy started attacking again or what?

Dhruvadevi: Yes, let's go.

Harisena: No, my Lady, you be here. Rohal cannot miss. He must have placed soldiers carefully. Let me go and check.

Dhruvadevi: All right, come back soon. (Harisena leaves) Kalidasa, has Bhagavati retired to bed?

Kalidasa: Yes, Shashilekha is with her.

Dhruvadevi: And Acharyadeva?

Kalidasa: He is the only one among us, fearless and invincible

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

like mount Meru[2] and he continually meditates, if someone asks him anything, he utters only one sentence: where be *dharma,* there be victory.

Dhruvadevi: That master among yogins is marvellous. Kalidasa, in comparison with his steady vision, eternal wisdom and irrevocable composure, we all, this kingdom, and the glory of Parakramadeva — all look trivial and transient.

Kalidasa: You said it. Like brisk waves, kingdoms of emperors dash against him and fall back, but that chief among mountains does not budge. Only its deep blue shade colors it with splendor and dignity.

[The clamor seems to recede.]

Dhruvadevi: Yes, were it not for him, our kingdom would not have been considered the kingdom of righteousness. It would have been without the glory of the Brahman[3] (Kalidasa smiles) Why do you smile?

Kalidasa: (smiling) My Lady, after all this trouble is over, when you rule without fear, you will see. Acharyadeva has established the kingdom of righteousness; I shall establish a kingdom of poetic flavor.[4]

Dhruvadevi: (with a dejected voice) Don't be silly. I am not going to rule, and in chasing Madhavi madly, you are not going to compose any poetry.

Kalidasa: (smiling) Please do not say so. The madder I get for Madhavi, the swifter is the flow of my poetry.

[2] Mount Meru, name of a fabulous mountain, around which all planets are said to revolve; it is also said to consist of gold and gems.

[3] *abrahmavarchasa*

[4] *Rasarajya, rasa,* the dominant sentiment in a play or a poem, lit. 'flavor.' According to *Natyashastra,* the treatise on Sanskrit dramaturgy, creation of *rasa, rasanishpatti,* is the objective of Sanskrit drama. The dominant *rasas* are eight: the erotic (*shringara*), the laughter (*hasya*), the pathetic (*karuna*), the ferocious or furious (*raudra*), the heroic (*vira*), the terrible (*bhayanaka*), the odious (*bibhatsa*), the wonderful (*adbhuta*), the quiescent (*shanta*); the parental (*vatsalya*) is also often added to the eight.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Dhruvadevi: (with a smile) What are you composing at present?

Kalidasa: I have composed one; but I won't tell you about it now.

[The clamor outside completely stops.]

Dhruvadevi: (listening intently) I guess they have repelled the attack and all is quiet ... (a window rattles) What is that? Kalidasa, bring my sword! (somebody climbs up) Who is that? Harisena? Rohal? (draws a dagger from her waist-band).

Kalidasa: Harisena! Soldiers! (draws his sword)

Ascendant: Oh, be quiet! You will wake up the whole palace ...

Dhruvadevi: (putting her hand on her chest) Who is it?

Chandragupta: It is I, my Lady!

[Jumps in from the window. He is dressed as a soldier. He carries a sword and a spear. He is covered with dust all over, but is radiant with zeal.]

Kalidasa: Maharaj!

Chandragupta: Yes, be quiet. Are you two alone here, or is anyone else around?

Dhruvadevi: No, we are alone. Hari ...

Chandragupta: Keep quiet. Don't call anybody. I am tired of faking insanity, let me be sane for a while. Kalidasa, get me some water. (smiling) For months I have not sat on anything but horseback; let me sit on the floor for a while.

[Breathes deeply and sits on a bench.[5] Kalidasa leaves

[5] Munshi does not resolve the discrepancy between "the floor" and "the bench."

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

to get some water.]

Dhruvadevi: But how did you come this way? The palace is surrounded.

Chandragupta: That is why I came this way. People rushed in, so I could rush too; and as I approached the fort, what could deter me? I have climbed every wall and jumped from every roof of this palace.

Dhruvadevi: (with joy and delight) My Kartikeya! After how many months are we meeting again! (smiles)

Chandragupta: (smiling) Yes, my Lady, I seem to have arrived in the nick of time.

Dhruvadevi: When do you not arrive in the nick of time? For the last three months we have been waiting for you like the *chataka* bird[5a] and for the last twenty-eight days we have been caged in this royal palace. We have survived only for your arrival.

Chandragupta: But what is all this? I came galloping post-haste as soon as I received your advice.

Dhruvadevi: Since you left for Malwa and I was proclaimed the queen, Skandagupta's maternal uncle started winning over people; and at last he drew the chief minister Vatsya also to his side. They all want to destroy me.

Chandragupta: (smiling) Let me see who destroys you! But what harm have you done to them?

Dhruvadevi: All of them are the protectors of Parakrama-deva's glory. I alone am its destroyer. It is rumored that it was I who killed Deva, and it was I who drove you to insanity.

Chandragupta: (smiling) Who else did drive me to insanity?

[5a] *Chataka*, name of a bird that lives only on rain drops and hence awaits the rainfall with upturned beak.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

[Dhruvadevi responds with a smile.]

Kalidasa: (entering) Maharaj, here is water for you.

Chandragupta: Give it to me. I have not had a drop of water for the whole day.

[Drinks]

Dhruvadevi: Would you like to eat something? Shall I send for some food?

Chandragupta: I lose my appetite when my blood boils.

Kalidasa: Where is your army?

Chandragupta: (with a smile) You are timid! You ask about nothing else but the army. Eight days ago I left my army and turned my galloping horse on the way to Kusumpura. Undan is following me slowly. Why, is the need here very great? ...

Dhruvadevi: Need? The royal palace will collapse any moment, everything depends on your army.

Chandragupta: (smiling) Am I not sufficient alone? My Lady, am I, the vanquisher of the Mahakshatrapa and the lord of Surashtra, not enough?

Dhruvadevi: The lord of Surashtra?

Chandragupta: Yes, I burnt Girinagar and Vriddhanagar, and made them desolate. Funeral pyres of all sixteen sons of Rudrasena are still burning near Girinagar.

Dhruvadevi: (delighted) What? Really? Parakramadeva's glory ...

Chandragupta: Then what? I am supposed to be a mad man! Do you know, if I do not do that, Parakramadeva's horses would start crying? My Lady, now even Surashtra is part

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

of your empire.

Dhruvadevi: What are you saying?

Chandragupta: Kalidasa, I hope, nobody is likely to come. If somebody does, let me know; I shall fake madness again.

Kalidasa: Nobody is likely to. Dattadevi is asleep; Acharyadeva is meditating; Harisena and other commanders are on the fort.

Dhruvadevi: Do you continue to fake madness?

Chandragupta: Yes, ask anybody other than you two. (mimicking) Mad, crazy poor Chandragupta!

Dhruvadevi: Now, enough of that.

Chandragupta: (getting up, and with seriousness) My Lady, let us not talk about it; otherwise I will really go mad.

Dhruvadevi: Maharaj, leave it at that, be seated. For months I have had the desire to talk to you; so far it has remained unfulfilled.

Chandragupta: Here I sit. (sits again) Tell me, what else is new here?

Dhruvadevi: (sitting down) I have told you everything. We believe the royal palace will collapse any moment, and we have taken a vow to keep the banner of your and Parakramadeva's glory flying till we remain alive.

Kalidasa: Yes, only a minute ago my Lady told Harisena that even if this palace is burnt to ashes, she will protect the sceptre, standing on the ashes till Dattadevi's son returned.

[Abashed, Dhruvadevi looks down.]

Chandragupta: (becoming serious) My Lady, why for me?

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Dhruvadevi: (smiling) Did you not conquer Surashtra for me? (both laugh and again become serious)

Chandragupta: (looking down) Now we have indeed become crazy.

Dhruvadevi: After many years, I like to utter nonsense. Who knows what will happen tomorrow! But Maharaj, you will have to wield the sceptre from tomorrow.

Chandragupta: (sadly) I? No, that is not possible. I am, after all, mad.

Dhruvadevi: (impatiently) If you do that, I too will go mad. What then?

Chandragupta: (smiling) Let us talk about something else. I shall have to fake madness, should someone arrive. Let me refresh myself. Let me enjoy something other than rushing and fighting. (breathes a sigh of relief) Kalidasa, have you composed anything new lately? Let's hear it.

Kalidasa: (smiling) Recently I have started composing *Kumarasambhava*.[6]

Chandragupta: Let's hear it, come on. My Lady, of late, it is rare to hear even Kalidasa's poetry.

Kalidasa: Listen then. Only a few days ago I wrote this (clears his throat) Rati weeps after Shankara reduces Kamadeva to ashes:[7]

> One, who lived enthralled by you—
> In a moment you relinquished her love

[6] One of the speculative dates of the *Kumarasambhavam* is 380 A.D. which coincides with the time of this play. For further discussion on it, see previous chapter. It is one of Kalidasa's earlier works. The themes of Rati's separation from her husband Kamadeva and of the love of Parvati for Shiva suitably underline the emotions of Chandragupta and Dhruvadevi.

[7] Urged by gods, Kamadeva, the god of love, tried to incite love in the heart of Shiva for the birth of a son who could lead the gods to victory against the demon Taraka. Kamadeva was burnt to ashes by enraged Shiva's third fiery eye.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

And the banks being shattered, like an ocean,
Where did you run away, leaving the lotus behind?

Nothing untoward have you done to me,
Nor have I performed the unfavorable,
Without any cause, why do you turn away
From lamenting Rati?

Chandragupta: Beautiful...

[Stops as he looks at Dhruvadevi.]

Kalidasa:

Once with my girdle I fastened you
For taking another's name by mistake,
Once I thrashed you with a lotus
Smara, what, do you still remember that?[8]

My love, your words, 'you live in my heart' must be false, Or else, how could Rati remain alive, when you are bodyless?[9]

[Kalidasa stops to look at both of them. Both of them look at each other and then look down.]

Bowing your head at my feet, oh my love, in
privacy you begged
For tight, throbbing, pleasant embraces — its
memory makes me restless.

[Dhruvadevi looks down.]

Kalidasa: (looking at Chandragupta) Then Rati utters what is most appropriate only for the beloved maddened by love:

Following the purified path of fire[10]
Let me come and reside once again in your heart,

[8] There is a pun on the word *smara*. It is one of the names of Cupid; and the root verb *smru* in Sanskrit means 'to remember'.

[9] *Ananga*, lit. 'without body'. Since Cupid was burnt to ashes by Shiva, he acquired this appellation.

[10] The reference here is to Rati's determination of burning herself to be a *sati*.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

So that the beautiful girls in the land of gods
May not attract you.

Chandragupta: (clearing his throat) Kalidasa, enough of that. Now recite something else.

Kalidasa: (slyly) Something else? All right. Here are some other verses from the same poem. Listen. Parvati, rejected by Shankara,[11] is undergoing penance; a young student recluse[12] asks a question to which Parvati's companion replies:

The Lord of abundant prosperity, resembling Indra, the protector of the universe,
Is forsaken by the strong-willed, desiring Shankara for a husband;

By his self control he who conquered Cupid[13] in a moment
How can he be tempted by beauty and charm?

Hearing the unbearable 'hum'[14] sound, he who returned rejected,
The wielder of flowery arrow[15] which could not pierce Shiva;

The same bodyless one is torturing every limb of Uma,
Upon a tender heart, deep wounds he mercilessly inflicts;

Braids of hair are rusty by the sandal-wood paste on the forehead,
The strength of the bodyless multiplies every day in every limb of her body;

And thence this girl stayed always at her father's,
But never did she acquire peace even from a cold rocky

[11] *Indumauli*, lit. 'the moon-crested god.'
[12] *Brahmachari*, the student here is disguised Shiva who has come to test Parvati's sincerity. In response to his queries, Parvati's companion describes to him her state of determination to win Shiva.
[13] *Ratinatha* 'husband of Rati', i.e. Kamadeva, Cupid.
[14] *Humkara* Uttering the sound "hum" expressing different feelings, here, anger.
[15] *Pushpabana* 'whose arrow is flower', Cupid.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

surface.[16]

[Dhruvadevi glares at him reprimandingly.]

Kalidasa: My Lady, hear something about Parvati's penance:

Of Shiva's[17] disposition does she sing songs with tender emotion,
But her voice chokes breaking the chain of words;

Hearing her songs in the woods, the Kinnara's[18] daughter
Would shed tears with Parvati out of friendly concern.

(softly)
In the elongated nights she closes her eyes but for a moment.
Suddenly waking up, utters indistinct words.

Saying, 'Where are you going Nilakantha?'[19] she extends her arms
And embraces Nilakantha in imagination.

Dhruvadevi: (angrily) Kalidasa, what are you up to today? Why do you say all this?

Kalidasa: (mischievously) What is it? What is wrong with you two today? If you are not interested in my poetry, let it be. I am leaving.

[Leaves. Both remain quiet.]

Chandragupta: (after a while) How is Dattadevi?

Dhruvadevi: (looking down) She is all right.

[Both sit silently for a while.]

[16] Refers to the snow covered mount Himalaya, Parvati's father.
[17] *Pinaki*, name of Shiva..
[18] *Kinnara*, a mythical being with human body, and horse's head.
[19] *Nilakantha*, lit. 'the blue-necked ' i.e. Shiva. Shiva is supposed to have retained in his throat, the poison that emerged at the churning of the ocean as a result of which his neck turned blue.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Chandragupta: Vatsya, the chief minister, also proved to be wicked.

Dhruvadevi: Yes.

[Once again they both sit quietly for a while.]

Dhruvadevi: Don't you want to eat something?

Chandragupta: No.

[There is a heavy thump outside.]

Dhruvadevi: (startled) What is that?

Chandragupta: Somebody seems to have fallen off the fort.

Dhruvadevi: Oh.

Chandragupta: What are you thinking?

Dhruvadevi: Nothing. Why don't you say something?

Chandragupta: What could I say? (gets up and paces up and down) My Lady, how long shall we sit here without a word?

Dhruvadevi: What else could we do? (yawns)

Chandragupta: Do you feel sleepy?

Dhruvadevi: No.

[Both sit quietly again].

Chandragupta: My Lady, for the first time in life we are by ourselves today; and I have so much to say, but I know not how.

Dhruvadevi: Maharaj... (cracking) Maharaj...

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Chandragupta: (startled) What is it? (softening the voice) My Lady!

Dhruvadevi: (scared, looks down) Maharaj, in life often do I feel...

Chandragupta: (gets up and sits by her side, clenching his teeth) I become desperate too.

Dhruvadevi: Should we continually bear the burden of Parakramadeva's glory and Yajnavalkya's *dharma*?

Chandragupta: (sadly) Yes... for the whole life.

[Both sit quietly.]

Chandragupta: Dhruvadevi!

Dhruvadevi: Maharaj!

Chandragupta: (clenching his teeth, gets up) My Lady, we must not remain thus in privacy.

Dhruvadevi: (cracking) Maharaj, for my whole life, I aspired for... bore separation... and...

[Bangs her hand.]

Chandragupta: (strikes his forehead) Fate! Fate! Devi, come on, let's go.

Dhruvadevi: Go? ... (looking with luster in her eyes) Tomorrow will dawn and the world will not let us sit like this.

Chandragupta: Yes, and tomorrow morning our heads will not be on our shoulders either. ...

[Once again they both remain silent for a while.]

Dhruvadevi: Whether we live or die is immaterial with such

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

meaningless life (places her hand on her head).

Chandragupta: (staring at the ground) We have to torture ourselves for glory and victory...

Dhruvadevi: (in a pleading voice) Maharaj!

Chandragupta: Swans in the pond and pigeons on the roof are more fortunate than we are.

Dhruvadevi: (looks around) How peaceful it is!

Chandragupta: (extending his arms a little) Devi!

Dhruvadevi: Oh Lakshmipati (Vishnu), what is the future?

Chandragupta: Oh Vishnu, when shall we be free from all this?

[Gets up and walks around.]

Dhruvadevi: Maharaj, Maharaj, come here and sit. (puts her hand on her head) I am feeling dizzy. I am going crazy, Maharaj!

Chandragupta: (struggling to maintain balance) Devi, be kind, please do not ask me to come near you.

Dhruvadevi: Maharaj, for how long should we remain apart this way? For how long? Fettered by the chains of glory and *dharma*...

Chandragupta: Yes, fettered — fettered! We have to live for others, for a mirage! (losing patience) Devi!

Dhruvadevi: My Kartikeya!

[Goes closer.]

Chandragupta: (moves away) Don't come closer! Ancestral glory and Acharya's teachings are on the verge of collapse!

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Dhruvadevi: Let them. . . .

[Both get closer, are about to hold each other, but move away.]

Kalidasa: (entering, to himself) Oh! Why on earth should I be intruding?

[Stands on the side.]

Dhruvadevi: Maharaj, we are the pillars of *dharmarajya*. . .

Chandragupta: (clenching his teeth) Yes. (turns back) Yes, glory, family, and *dharma*—Yes, my veins are throbbing as though I am delirious. . . Like inflamed fire you are burning me within. . . Oh, it is all undesirable! . . . (clenching his teeth) Where be *dharma,* there be victory: that's the creed of the Gupta family.

[Looks down.]

Dhruvadevi: At least, look up.

Chandragupta: Dhruvadevi, how can I look up? I can't take what my heart pines for. Can't give what I desire to. . . Mere dry shells of *dharma* and glory. . .

Dhruvadevi: Why are they all created? If all should vanish, day and night, happiness and misery, good and evil. . . and only. . .

Chandragupta: Dhruvadevi, if somebody with his magic wand would make this entire world disappear and cover the sky, and we be surrounded by impregnable privacy for eternity, we would not even care to look at this world. . .

Dhruvadevi: Wish we could realize our dreams in this life.

[Extends her hand. Chandragupta moves back.]

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Kalidasa: (to himself) Oh Lord Kamadeva![20]

Chandragupta: (covering his eyes) My Lady, let it be, let it be. We are dreaming, we have gone mad.

Dhruvadevi: Yes, we have gone mad.

Chandragupta: My Lady, where be *dharma,* there be victory!

Dhruvadevi: (sighs) I know it.

Chandragupta: I can't bear this. I can't remain here, my Lady!

[Covers his eyes.]

Dhruvadevi: Oh Kamalavallabha (Vishnu)!

[Sits down and sobs. Kalidasa goes away. A clamor is heard outside the palace gate as if the enemy has attacked. There is an uproar inside the palace too.]

Dhruvadevi: What could it be, Maharaj?

Chandragupta: People outside seem to be breaking the palace gate. From the noises, I believe three elephants are straining to break the gates open ... We are done for!

Dhruvadevi: (scared) Why?

Chandragupta: These gates will not be able to resist so much pressure. (a loud sound) The gates seem to have begun to break.

[Turns to go.]

Dhruvadevi: Maharaj, where are you going?

[Another loud sound and screaming are heard outside.]

[20] *Kusumayudha*, lit. 'armored with flowers', Cupid.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Chandragupta: Where? On the fort, of course. . . .

[Looks around on all sides.]

Dhruvadevi: (coming closer) What will happen to us, if Skandagupta captures the palace?

Chandragupta: Nothing will happen my Lady, keep courage.

Dhruvadevi: (imploring) Maharaj, I kept courage so far, now I cannot any more. Maharaj, please don't go. (more clamor and uproar are heard outside) Maharaj, I earnestly request you, please hide yourself. These people are thirsty for my blood. Let me die alone. Their fanaticism will subside with my death.

Chandragupta: My Lady, what are you saying? Am I going to save my life at the cost of yours? My Lady, how can you say so? My blood will perish, but yours must not even be touched. Death is like a straw for a hero. Don't worry. Let me go. What are these kids going to do to me?

[An extremely loud noise is heard outside, and by the sound it appears that the gates have been broken open. Chandragupta tries to leave. Dhruvadevi holds him by his hand.]

Dhruvadevi: No, Maharaj, my Lord![21]

[Picks up a dagger lying on the bench.]

Chandragupta: Why?

Dhruvadevi: Suppose something should happen to you—then (comes closer, with throbbing heart) I want to lie on your funeral pyre.[22]

[21] *Swami* 'husband' and 'lord'. When used by a woman, it generally means 'husband.' Munshi makes Dhruvadevi quite aggressive in this Act. She also initiates physical closeness which Chandragupta resists by immense self-control.

[22] Dhruvadevi expresses her desire to be a *sati* indicating that she considers Chandragupta her husband.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Chandragupta: (in a hurry to leave) These people seem to have entered the palace. ... Let me go, my Lady! ...

Dhruvadevi: Then my Lord, take me along. If we did not find a priest who would unite us in this life, then Yama[23] will unite us in death. Let us both go out, let us die or let us run away crossing over the bridge of cadavers.

[People are heard coming up the staircase.]

Chandragupta: No. See, the enemies seem to be coming up the main stairs. ... (the sound is heard nearer) They are coming up. My Lady, (his face becomes fierce) come over on this side, here. Let me see who touches the honor of the Gupta Queen! (Kalidasa comes in with Madhavasena[23a] and Dattadevi) Who, Bhagavati?

Dattadevi: Who, my son? How come you are here at this time? My dearest son, the palace is captured, your enemies are approaching. How did you get here at this time?

Chandragupta: (with pride) Bhagavati, you speak thus? The queen of the one of unbeatable prowess[24] of the deadly axe; you have grown old having seen one thousand battles, how come you are scared?

Dattadevi: (joyfully) My son, are you sane again?

Chandragupta: I am mad.... I am overpowered with the craze to save the glory of Parakramadeva. Let me see who can touch us in the palace of Parakramadeva and still go alive. Revered mother, Bhagavati, Parakramadeva's horses are ferocious, they are neighing, they have embarked on a conquest.

Dattadevi: (dejected) He is still mad!

Kalidasa: Maharaj, they will soon be here. Let us go on the

[23] *Yama*, god of death. [23a] Another name for Madhavi.
[24] *Aprativaryavirya* 'prowess that cannot be beaten'. refers to Parakramadeva.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

other side.

Harisena: (comes running. He is wounded) My Lady... Who Maharaj? Maharaj, we have lost everything... all our men are killed. Skandagupta and Vatsya will soon arrive. Let us run away.

[The hall door is pushed from outside.]

Chandragupta: Harisena, son of Dhruvabhuti, you too are scared? Give me your axe. Don't worry. I am going to open the door. Parakramadeva's son will offer them a befitting welcome.

Dhruvadevi: (pleading with tearful eyes, looks at Chandragupta) My Lord!

[Everybody is startled.]

Chandragupta: Bhagavati, you are an elder. Harisena and Kalidasa, you are brahmins. We two are mad. We were going to die together... so that our marriage can be solemnized by Yama[25] in the other world. Before I open this door, will you officiate our marriage in this life?

Dattadevi: (amazed) Chandra!

Chandragupta: Bhagavati, do not worry. Please forgive us, if you consider it sacrilegious. What do you say Harisena, Kalidasa?

Harisena: Maharaj, but at this moment...

Chandragupta: Harisena, I command you.

Kalidasa: (wiping his tears) My Lady, I shall perform the marriage ceremony. If *dharma* (law) disapproves of it, let it be so. The law of love has accepted your marriage for a long time.

[25] *Kritantaparashu*, 'the deadly battle axe,' refers to Parakramadeva. *Kritanta* 'one who brings an end', death—Yama.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Yajnavalkya: (entering peacefully) What does *dharma* disapprove?

[People outside push the door vigorously.]

Chandragupta: Who, Acharyadeva? (bowing low) Welcome. Please perform our marriage. I want to open these doors to welcome Yama.

Dhruvadevi: (folding her hands) If I have to die, I wish to die as Maharaj's wife.

Kalidasa: (assertively) If your *dharma* disapproves this, tell me, so that I can solemnize the marriage.

Yajnavalkya: Children, *dharma* and ethics both will accept your marriage. All the three, *Atharva Angirasa, Kautilya* and *Yajnavalkya Smriti*[26] — all these concur on this. The son of Dharmaditya,[27] and the daughter of Achyutadeva (joining their hands)

May you be pleasing to father-in-law,
May you be pleasing to mother-in-law,
May you be pleasing to sister-in-law,
May you greatly please brother-in-law.
Children, may you live long and be happy.

[From outside people vigorously push shaking the doors.]

Chandragupta: (proudly turning to the door) And now Acharyadeva, Bhagavati and Devi, let us see who craves to meet Parakramadeva's son! Harisena, let me have your axe. (takes the axe, goes to the door—and instantly opens the doors. Skanda, Vatsya and others who were trying to break open the doors, rush in. Chandragupta looks at them with dignity. In a fierce voice) Skanda, Vatsya, Damana, why have you come? Who taught you such manners to

[26] Three treatises on religion, polity and social code that probably formed the basis of Gupta *dharmarajya*.
[27] *Dharmaditya* 'the Sun of Righteousness,' Samudragupta.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

approach the conquerors of the world?

Vatsya: (startled and embarrassed) Maharaj!

Chandragupta: (laughing with authority) Harisena, Commander General, the Chief Minister has grown old. He does not see who he is talking to. You are talking to the king of kings, Chandragupta, the great Bhagavata. And Skanda, you fool, where did you get this idea? You all dare attack the palace of the great Bhagavatas?

[glares angrily.]

Skanda: (trembling) Maharaj!

Harisena: Maharajadhiraj![28]

Damana: (insolently stepping forward) We want that woman —destroyer of the family...

Chandragupta: Beware! Damana, if you utter a single word against my great queen Dhruvasvaminidevi, you will lose your head, understood?

Vatsya: (confused, looks around) Your great queen...

Chandragupta: Chief Minister, Acharyadeva solemnized our marriage just now. (addressing some citizens who are trying to peep through the door) And you all, come on in. My heroic men, citizens, announce 'Victory to unbeatable prowess of Samudragupta.' I will give you news regarding Surashtra. Our army has totally destroyed the family of the Shaka king. The victory banner of the great Bhagavata is unfurled in Surashtra; the victorious Magadhan army led by Commander General Undan, is arriving. Go and welcome them; from tomorrow we—I and Dhruvasvaminidevi—will be ruling the world... (everybody is silent) Speak up. Skanda, Vatsya, Damana... heroes,

[28] *Maharajadhiraj* 'king of kings', the title used for the ruling emperor. Harisena here indicates Chandragupta's elevation to this position by this last victory over his opponents.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

here I stand... alone... without arms (throws away his weapons) I am going to announce victory to Parakramadeva. What have you to say?... (everybody is quiet) "Victory to Parakramadeva" (almost all join the cry).

Harisena: And say: "Victory to the king of kings, the great Lord Shri Chandragupta!" "Victory to the great Queen Dhruvasvaminidevi!"

[Vatsya, Skanda and Damana keep staring.]

People: "Victory to Maharaj Chandragupta and Dhruvasvaminidevi!"

Dattadevi: (proudly) And my sons, proclaim to the world that a redeemer of the Guptas is born today.

Dhruvadevi: And today the Sun of valor[29] has arisen.

Chandragupta: And spread the victory cry in the world: "Where be *dharma,* there be victory"... and Acharyadeva, please bless me and Devi.

[Chandragupta and Dhruvadevi bow down to Yajnavalkya.]

Yajnavalkya: (extending his arms) The blessing that I gave your father once, today again, I am giving you: In the land where Krishna is the king, may you spread *dharma.*

CURTAIN

[29] *Vikram no aditya* 'the Sun of valor.' Munshi plays upon the title Vikramaditya that Chandragupta acquired later.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

APPENDIX A

Munshi's Works in their Order of Publication

In Gujarati

1. *Mari Kamala ane Biji Vato* (My Kamala and Other Stories) A collection of short stories, *1912.*
2. *Ver ni Vasulat* (Revenge Accomplished), Social novel, *1913.*
3. *Kono Vank* (Whose Fault?), Social novel, *1915.*
4. *Patan ni Prabhuta* (The Greatness of Patan), Historical novel, *1916.*
5. *Gujarat no Nath* (The Lord of Gujarat), Historical novel, *1917.*
6. *Prithvi Vallabh* (The Darling of the World), Historical novel, *1920.*
7. *Vava Sheth nun Swatantrya* (The Freedom of Vava Sheth), Social play, *1921.*
8. *Rajadhiraj* (The King of Kings), Historical novel, *1922.*
9. *Purandar Parajaya* (The Defeat of Indra), Mythological play *1922.*
10. *Shambar Kanya* (Daughter of King Shambar), Mythological, part II of LOP, *1922.*
11. *Bhagavan Kautilya* (Lord Kautilya), Historical novel, *1923.*
12. *Avibhakta Atma* (The Undivided Soul), Mythological play, *1923.*

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

13. *Svapnadrishta* (The Dreamer), Social Novel, *1924.*
14. *Be Kharab Jan* (Two Bad Guys), Social play, *1924.*
15. *Tarpana* (The Obsequial Offering), Mythological play, *1924.*
16. *Ketalak Lekho* (Some Articles), I & II, Literary criticism, *1926.*
17. *Gujarat na Jyotirdharo* (The Torch-bearers of Gujarat), Historical biographies, 1926.
18. *Ajnankita* (The Obedient), Social play, *1927.*
19. *Kaka ni Shashi* (Uncle's Shashi), Social play, *1929.*
20. *Putra Samovadi* (Like Unto a Son), Mythological play, *1929.*
21. *Dhruvasvaminidevi,* Historical play, *1929.*
22. *Sneha Sambhrama* (Confusion of Love), Social play, *1931.*
23. *Brahmacharyashrama* (The Hermitage of Continence), Social play, *1931.*
24. *Shishu ane Sakhi* (The Child and the Comrade), Autobiographical prose-poem, *1932.*
25. *Lopamudra* I, Mythological novel, 1933.
26. *Thodank Rasadarshano* (Some Literary Appreciations), Literary criticism, *1933.*
27. *Narasaiyo Bhakta Harino* (Narasinha, the Devotee of Hari), Biographical Sketch, *1933.*
28. *Adivachano* (Words at the Beginning), Inaugural addresses at Gujarati Literary Conferences, part I collected, *1933.*
29. *Deve Didheli* (Given by God) Mythological play, part III of *LOP, 1934.*
30. *Vishvamitra Rishi,* Mythological play, part IV of *LOP, 1934.*
31. *Dr. Madhurika,* Social play, 1936.
32. *Narmad,* Biography, *1939.*
33. *Gujarat ni Asmita* (Gujarat Consciousness), Essays on Culture, *1939.*
34. *Jay Somnath* (Hail Somnath), Historical novel, *1940.*
35. *Adivachano* II, Inaugural addresses, *1941.*
36. *Adadhe Raste* (Half Way), Autobiography, *1943* (was serialized in 1932-33).
37. *Mari Binjawabdar Kahani* (My Irresponsible Story), Autobiography, *1943.*
38. *Sidhan Chadhan* (Steep Ascent), I & II, Autobiography, *1923.* (Was serialized in 1932-1933).
39. *Europe ni Safare* (Travel to Europe) Travel notes, *1943.*
40. *Lomaharshini,* Mythological novel, *1945.*
41. *Bhagavan Parashurama* (Lord Parashurama), Mythological novel, *1946.*
42. *Pidagrasta Professor* (The Afflicted Professor), Social play, *1946.*
43. *Chhie Tej Thik* (Best as We Are), Social play, *1946.*
44. *Ketalik Vibhutio* (Some Great Beings), Biography, *1947.*

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

45. *Dr. Madhurika* Film Script from the original social play, *1948.*
46. *Atma-Shilpa ni Kelavani* (Education for Self-sculpture), Essay, *1950.*
47. *Bhagawad Gita ane Arvachin Jivan* (Bhagawad Gita and Modern Life), Translation of the original English work, *1950.*
48. *Gujarat ni Kirtigatha* (Story of Gujarat's Glory), Historical writings, *1952.*
49. *Swapna Siddhi ni Shodhaman* (In Search of Dream Realization), Autobiograhy, *1953.*
50. *Vah re Men Vah* (Well Done, Myself), Fantasy—a play, *1953.*
51. *Parishad ne Pramukh Padethi* (Presidential Address at Literary convention), Lectures, *1955.*
52. *Bhagna Paduka* (The Broken Sandals), Historical novel, *1956.* (Written in 1948).
53. *Tapasvini* (The Lady Sage) I & II in *1957,* III in *1958.*
54. *Narasinha Yuga na Kavio* (Poets of the Narasinh Era), Literary History, *1962.*
55. *Krishnavatara* (The Descent of the Lord), Mythological Novel; I — 1963, II — 1966, III — 1968, IV — 1969, V — 1970, VI — 1972, VII & VIII (Combined) — *1974.*
This novel started being serialized in "Samarpan" in *1960.*
Parts VI, VII, and VIII were posthumously published.
56. *Chakravarti Gurjaro* (Emperors of Gujarat), Historical Research, *1966.*

In English

57. *I Follow the Mahatma, 1940.*
58. *The Early Aryans in Gujarat, 1941.*
59. *Akhand Hindustan, 1942.*
60. *The Glory that Was Gurjar Desha,* I — *1943,* II — *1944,* both revised in *1954.*
61. *Imperial Gurjars, 1944.*
62. *The Indian Deadlock, 1945.*
63. *The Ruin that Britain Wrought, 1946.*
64. *The Creative Art of Life, 1946.*
65. *The Changing Shape of Indian Politics, 1946.*
66. *Bhagavad Gita and Modern Life, 1947.*
67. *Gandhi, the Master, 1948.*
68. *Linguistic Provinces and the Future of Bombay, 1948.*
69. *Somnath, the Shrine Eternal, 1951.*
70. *Land Transformation, a Philosophy, a Faith, 1951.*
71. *Sparks From the Anvil, 1951.*
72. *Gospel of the Dirty Hand, 1952.*

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

73. *Our Greatest Need and Other Addresses, 1953.*
74. *To Badrinath, 1953.*
75. *Janu's Death and Other Kulapati's Letters, 1954.*
76. *City of Paradise and Other Kulapati's Letters, 1954.*
77. *Sparks From the Governor's Anvil, 1956.*
78. *The Wolf Boy and Other Kulapati's Letters, 1956.*
79. *The Saga of Indian Sculpture, 1957.*
80. *The End of an Era: Hyderabad Memoirs, 1957.*
81. *Swan Love and Other Kulapati's Letters, 1958.*
82. *The World We Saw, 1960.*
83. *Replies to the Reader, 1961.*
84. *Warnings of History, 1961.*
85. *Reconstruction of Society through Trusteeship, 1961.*
86. *Foundations of Indian Culture, 1962.*
87. *President Under the Indian Constitution, 1963.*
88. *Chinese Aggression, 1963.*
89. *National Emergency and Its Problems, 1963.*
90. *Bombay High Court: Half a Century of Reminiscences, 1963.*
91. *Views and Vistas, 1965.*
92. *Gandhiji's Philosophy in Life and Action, 1965.*
93. *Pilgrimage to Freedom, 1968.*
94. *Problems of Food and Agriculture, 1974.*

In translation

1. *Kulavadhu,* an original Hindi film script, *1936.*
2. *Lopamudra,* Hindi, I-*1938,* II, III, IV no dates available.
3. *Adhe Raste,* Hindi, *1945.*
4. *Sidhi Chadan,* Hindi, *1946.*
5. *Lomaharshini,* Hindi, *1947.*
6. *Ver ni Vasulat,* Hindi and English, no dates available.
7. *Bhagavan Parashurama,* Hindi, *1951.*
8. *Bhagavan Kautilya,* Hindi, no date.
9. *Kono Vank?* Hindi, no date.
10. *Svapna Siddhi ki Khojamen,* Hindi, 1954.
11. *Svapnadrishta,* Hindi, no date.
12. *Shishu aur Sakhi,* Hindi, no date.
13. *Patan ka Prabhutva,* Hindi, *1948.*
14. *Vah re Main Vah,* Hindi, *1955.*
15. *Bhagna Paduka,* Hindi, *1957.*
16. *Rajadhiraja,* Hindi, no date.
17. *Gujarat ka Nath,* Hindi, no date.
18. *Bhagavad Gita aur Adhunik Jivan,* Hindi, *1958.*
19. *Badrinath ki Aur,* Hindi, *1959.*
20. *Bhagavan Parashurama,* I & II, English, *1959.*
21. *Jaya Somnath,* Hindi, *1960*; English, *1976.*

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

22. *Prithvi Vallabh,* English (1961), Hindi, Marathi, Bengali, Tamil, Kannada, dates not available.
23. *Krishnavatara,* English, I — *1962,* II — *1963,* III — *1965,* IV — *1967,* V — *1968,* VI — *1971,* VII & VIII — *1973.*
24. *Prithvi Vallabh,* an adaptation in Sanskrit drama, *1962.*
25. *Prithvi Vallabh,* an adaptation in Gujarati drama, *1962.*
26. *Jayadevam,* Tamil, *1963.*
27. *Krishnavatara,* Kannada, I — *1964,* II — *1965,* II — *1966,* IV — *1967.*
28. *Tapasvini,* Hindi, I — *1964,* II — *1965,* III — *1966.*
29. *Tarpana,* Hindi, no date.
30. *Tapasvini,* English, *1964.*
31. *Krishnavatara,* Hindi, I — *1964,* II — *1966.*
32. *Bhagavan Parashurama,* Marathi, *1967.*

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

APPENDIX B

Dates and Events of Munshi's Life

1887 Born at Broach, Gujarat State, on December 30.
1897 Invested with a sacred thread, being a Brahmin.
1900 Married to Atilakshmi Pathak.
1901 Completed high school education.
1902 Joined Baroda College.
1904 Came under the influence of his Professor Arvind Ghosh, later, Sri Aurobindo.
Founded a free library at Broach.
1905 Passed First LL.B. with first class, winning a prize.
1906 Passed B.A., winning Elliot Memorial prize.
1907 Settled in Bombay.
Attended Surat Congress; first exposure to Tilak, Bipin Pal, and Lajpat Rai.
1910 Passed final LL.B. examination.
Enrolled as pleader on the Appellate side of Bombay High Court.
1911 Became secretary of Gurjar Sabha (Gujarati Literary Society). Won Students' Brotherhood Motiwala prize for his article, "Theory and Practice of Social Service."
1912 Promoted a monthly, *Bhargava*.
1913 Enrolled as an Advocate on the Original side of Bombay High Court. Joined Bhulabhai Desai as his junior.
1915 Started "Young India," and became its joint editor.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Joined Home-Rule League.

1917 Became member of the Subjects Committee of the Indian National Congress.
Elected Secretary of the Bombay Presidency Association.

1919 Elected Secretary of the Bombay Home-Rule League.

1920 Resigned from the Indian National Congress and the Home-Rule League.

1922 Founded *Gujarati Sahitya Sansad* (Gujarati Literary Society.)
Started *Gujarat,* an illustrated monthly, and became its Joint Editor.
Literary collaboration with Lilavati Sheth.

1923 Visited Europe.

1924 Elected President of the Panchagani Hindu Educational Society.
Elected Chairman of Sir H. N. Hospital.
Wife Atilakshami died.

1926 Elected Fellow of the Bombay University.
Elected to the Senate of the Bombay University.
Elected Vice President of *Gujarati Sahitya Parishad* (Gujarati Literary Conference).
Founded Gujarat University Society, and became its Secretary.
Appointed member of the Baroda University Commission.
Married Lilavati Sheth.

1927 Elected Chairman of the Gujarati Board of Studies of the Bombay University.
Elected to the Bombay Legislative Council.

1928 Assisted in piloting the Bombay University Bill.
Appointed Chairman of the Physical Culture Committee, by the Bombay Government.
Appointed member of the Secondary Education Committee, by the Bombay Government.

1929 Elected member of the Academic Council of the Bombay University.
Elected member of the Board of Post-graduate studies of the Bombay University.
Appointed Trustee of Bai Kabibai Trust.
Resigned from the Bombay Legislative Council during Bardoli *Satyagraha* movement.
Appointed Chairman of the Bardoli Committee of Inquiry.
Re-elected to the Bombay Legislative Council.

1930 Re-joined the Congress; participated in the Salt *Satyagraha* movement of Gandhi.
Sentenced to six months of imprisonment for this participation.
Sentenced to three months of imprisonment for partici-

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

pating in the Civil Disobedience movement.
Nominated Substitute member of the Working Committee of the Congress.
Founded the Bombay City Ambulance Corps, and was elected its President.

1931 Elected member of the Bombay Pradesh Congress Committee.
Elected member of the All India Congress Committee.
Re-joined Bombay Bar practice.
Appointed trustee of the M.S. Trust.

1932 Sentenced to two years of rigorous imprisonment by Lord Willingdon in his anti-Congress Campaign.
Sentenced to one year imprisonment for Civil Disobedience.

1933 Started a movement (after release in December) for a Parliamentary wing of the Congress, as a result of which *Swaraj* party was formed.

1934 Appointed Secretary of the Congress Parliament Board.

1935 Elected Director of the Bombay Life Assurance Company Ltd., and the Bombay Fire Assurance Company Ltd.
Elected Vice-Chairman of the Fellowship School Society.
Appointed Trustee of Kanji Khetsi Trust.

1936 Started the Hans Ltd., which took over the Hindi magazine *Hans*; and became its Joint Editor with Hindi writer Premchand.

1937 Elected to the Bombay Legislative Assembly.
Appointed Home Minister in the First Congress Government in Bombay.
Elected President of *Gujarati Sahitya Parishad* (Gujarati Literary Conference).

1938 Appointed Vice-President of Children's Aid Society.
Appointed Trustee of M. Goenka Trust.
Elected President of the Society for the Protection of Children in Western India.
Started (with Sardar Patel) Institute of Agriculture in Anand, Gujarat State, and was elected its Vice-Chairman.
Established Girls' Hostel in Bombay for college students.
Delivered the Thakkar Vassonji Madhavji Research Lectures in Bombay University on the "Early Aryans of Gujarat."
Founded the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, and was elected its President.

1939 Established Children's Home in a Bombay suburb.
Started Hansraj Morarji Public School in a Bombay suburb.
Resigned as Home Minister.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

1940 Started *Social Welfare,* an English Weekly, and became its Editor.
Elected President of the First All India Penal Reform Convention.
Established Home for the Mentally Retarded Children.
Arrested for individual *Satyagraha.*
1941 Released from detention because of severe illness.
Resigned from the Indian National Congress.
Conducted Akhand Hindustan (Undivided India) campaign.
1943 Organized Leaders' Conference in Delhi for negotiating Gandhi's release.
1944 Founded *Bharatiya Itihas Samiti* (Indian History Society) and was elected its Chairman.
Appointed Chairman of Baroda University Commission.
Appointed Chairman of the Commission to Report on the University of Gujarat in Ahmedabad, by the Bombay Government.
Appointed Trustee of the Krishnarpana Trust.
Appointed Trustee of All India *Arya-Dharma Seva Sangh* Trust.
Appointed Trustee of Singhania Trust.
1945 Inaugurated the All India Sanskrit Conference.
Delivered lectures on "Bhagavad Gita and Modern Life."
Elected Vice-President of *Gujarati Sahitya Parishad* (Gujarati Literary Conference).
1946 Founded Meghji Mathradas Arts College in Bombay.
Founded Narrondass Manordass Institute of Science in Bombay.
Re-joined the Indian National Congress.
Elected President of the All India *Hindi Sahitya Parishad* (All India Hindi Literary Convention).
Elected President of the *Hindu Deen Daya Sangh* (The Association for Mercy to the Hindu Poor).
Elected member of the Constituent Assembly.
Appointed member of the Experts Committee for drafting the Constitution of India.
Elected Chairman of Akhil Bharat Printers, Ltd. (All India Printers.)
Appointed Director of Nava-Bharat Publishers Ltd. (New India Publishers.)
1947 Appointed Agent-General of the Government of India in Hyderabad.
1948 Elected member of the Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly.
1950 Visited Europe and the U.S.A.
Appointed Minister for Food and Agriculture in the

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Government of India.

1951 Founded the *Sanskrit Vishva Parishad* (International Sanskrit Convention), and became its Chairman.
Elected Chairman of the Institute of Agriculture in Anand, Gujarat State.

1952 Appointed Governor of Uttar Pradesh (1952-1957) and as such was ex-officio Chancellor of the Universities of Agra, Allahabad, Lucknow, Gorakhpur, Roorki, and the Banaras Sanskrit University.

1956 Elected President of the Charotar Education Society, which ran colleges in the faculties of Arts, Sciences, Commerce, and Engineering.
Appointed Fellow of the Sardar Patel University, Anand.

1957 Appointed Executive Chairman of the Indian Law Institute (1957-1960), Delhi.

1959 Resigned from the Congress Party.
Elected Vice President of All India Swatantra Party.

1966 Elected Chairman of the All India Colloquium on Ethical and Spiritual Values as the Basis of National Integration, 1966-1967.

1968 Elected President of the All India University Teachers and Students Camp.

1969 Received Civic Address from the Mayor of Bombay.
Felicitated by the President of India, Dr. Zakir Hussain, at the *Abhinandan Samaroha* (Felicitation Celebration) and was presented a specially published volume, *Abhinandan Souvenir*, in New Delhi.

1971 Died in Bombay on February 8.

The following Honorary Degrees were conferred on Munshi:

D.Litt. by the Banaras Hindu University, 1946.
D.Litt. by the Saugor University, 1949.
LL.D. by the Osmania University, 1954.
LL.D. by the Baroda University, 1964.
LL.D. by the Bombay University, 1968.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

APPENDIX C

Munshi's Works Abbreviated in this Study

AA	—	*Avibhakta Atma*
AJN	—	*Ajnankita*
AR	—	*Adadhe Raste*
BHK	—	*Bhagavan Kautilya*
BHP	—	*Bhagavan Parashuram*
BKJ	—	*Be Kharab Jan*
BP	—	*Bhagna Paduka*
BRH	—	*Brahmacharyashram*
CTT	—	*Chhie Tej Thik*
DR	—	*Dr. Madhurika*
DSD	—	*Dhruvasvaminidevi*
GN	—	*Gujarat no Nath*
JS	—	*Jay Somnath*
KA	—	*Krishnavatara*
KS	—	*Kaka ni Shashi*
KV	—	*Kono Vank*
LOM	—	*Lomaharshini*
LOP	—	*Lopamudra*
MBK	—	*Mari Binjawabdar Kahani*

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

PID	—	*Pidagrasta Professor*
PP	—	*Patan ni Prabhuta*
PPJ	—	*Purandar Parajaya*
PS	—	*Putrasamovadi*
PV	—	*Prithvi Vallabh*
RR	—	*Rajadhiraj*
SC	—	*Sidhan Chadhan*
SS	—	*Shishu ane Sakhi*
SSS	—	*Svapna Siddhi ni Shodhaman*
SV	—	*Svapnadrishta*
TAP	—	*Tapasvini*
TAR	—	*Tarpan*
VAH	—	*Vah re Men Vah*
VV	—	*Ver ni Vasulat*
VVS	—	*Vava Sheth nun Swatantrya*

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Bibliography

Allen, Walter. *The English Novel.* Middlesex: Penguin, 1954.

Altekar, A. S. *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization.* Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1962.

Baker, G. P. *Dramatic Technique.* New York: De Capo Press, 1971.

Bakshi, R. *Vangmay Vimarsha,* 'Literary Evaluations.' Bombay: N. M. Tripathi, 1970.

Barry, Jackson G. *Dramatic Structure: The Shaping of Experience.* Berkeley University of California Press, 1970.

Bary, Wm Theodore de, et al, eds. *Sources of Indian Tradition.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1958, 1966.

Basham, A. L. *The Wonder That Was India.* New York: Grove Press, 1954. Evergreen edition, 1959.

Bentley, Eric. *In Search of Theater.* New York: Vintage Books, 1953, copyright, 1947.

Bharatiya Vidya XX-XXI. Munshi Indological Felicitation Vol. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1963.

Bhatt, P. *Madhupark,* 'Honey Extract.' 2nd ed. Ahmedabad: Saraswati Pustak Bhandar, 1970.

Bhayani, H. *Anusandhan* 'Aiming the Target.' Ahmedabad: Saraswati Pustak Bhandar, 1972.

Broker, G. *Abhivyakti* 'Expression.' Bombay: Chandra Prakashan, 1965.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Broker, G. et al eds. *Gujarat na Sahitya Sarjako* 'Literary Writers of Gujarat.' Bombay: Sea Suppliers, 1959.

Brown, Norman. "The Sanctity of the Cow in Hinduism" in *Economic Weekly*. 16 (Feb. 1964), 245-255.

Chakravarti, Amiya ed. *A Tagore Reader*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1961.

Choksi, Mahesh. *Gujarati Natya Sahitya no Udbhav ane Vikas* 'The Origin and Development of Gujarati Dramatic Literature.' Ahmedabad: Gujarat Sangit, Nritya, Natya Akademi, 1965.

Contemporary Indian Literature. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1957.

Dave, J. H. et al eds. *Munshi His Art and Work*, I—IV. Bombay: Shri Munshi Seventieth Birthday Citizens' Celebration Committee, 1957.

Dickinson, A. Jr. *American Historical Fiction*. New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1971.

Dikshit, Ramakant. et al eds. *Munshi Abhinandan Granth* (Hindi) 'Munshi Felicitation Volume.' Kanpur: Mitra Mandal, 1958.

Drew, Elizabeth. *The Novel*. New York: Dell, 1963.

Embree, Ainslie, ed. *The Hindu Tradition*. New York: Vintage Books, 1972, copyright 1966.

— *India's Search for National Identity*. New York: Knopf, 1971.

— *1857—Mutiny or War of Independence*. Boston: Heath & Co., 1963.

Fergusson, Francis. *The Idea of a Theater*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949.

Fleishman, Abram. *The English Historical Novel: Walter Scott to Virginia Woolf*. Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1971.

Frazer, R. W. *Indian Thought Past and Present*. London: Fisher Unwin, 1915.

Gandhi C. H. 'Suhasi'. *Sahityakara Kanaiyalal Munshi* 'Kanaiyalal Munshi, A Litterateur.' Surat: Rashtrabhasha Pustak Mandir, 1975.

Gandhi, M. K. *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, trans. from Gujarati dated 1927-29. Boston: Beacon, 1957.

Goodlad, J. *A Sociology of Popular Drama*. Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman & Littlefield, 1972.

Gordon, L. and Miller, Barbara: *A Syllabus of Indian Civilization*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1971.

Granville-Barker, H. G. *On Dramatic Method*. London: Sidgwick & Jackson, Ltd., 1931.

Granth, Vol. 8, No. 10-11, Oct-Nov., 1971. Special Munshi Issue.

Gupta, Rameschandra. *Dhruvasvamini ka Natya Saundarya*

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

(Hindi) 'Dramatic Beauty of *Dhruvasvamini.*' Delhi: Ashok Prakashan, 1966.

Gupta, Shantiswarup. *Prasad ke Natak evam Natyashilp.* (Hindi) 'Prasad's Plays and their Dramatic Structure.' Delhi: Ashok Prakashan, 1969.

Greig, J. Y. T. *The Psychology of Laughter and Comedy.* New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1969.

Harbage, A. *Shakespeare's Audience.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1961, copyright 1941.

Jhaveri, K. M. *Milestones in Gujarat Literature.* Bombay: N. M. Tripathi, Ltd., 1914, 2nd ed. 1938.

— *Further Milestones in Gujarati Literature.* Bombay: N. M. Tripathi Ltd., 1924. Revised and enlarged edition published by Shree Forbes Gujarati Sabha, Bombay, 1956.

Jhaveri, Mansukhlal: *Abhigam* 'Approach:' Bombay: Chandra Prakashan, 1966.

— "Gujarati Literature" in *Contemporary Indian Literature.* Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1957.

— *Thoda Vivechan Lekho* 'Some Critical Essays.' Ahmedabad: Gurjar Granth Ratna Karyalaya, 1959.

Jhaveri M. and Shah R. *Gujarati Sahitya nu Rekhadarshana* 'Glimpses of Gujarati Literature.' Bombay: Vora & Co., 1953.

Joshi, Ramanlal. *Parimana* 'A Measure.' Ahmedabad: Gurjar Granth Ratna Karyalaya, 1969.

— *Pratyaya* 'Conjugation.' Ahmedabad: Abhinava Prakashana, 1970.

Joshi, Suresh. "Navalkatha Vishe" (About the Novel) in *Kshitij* Vol. 6, No. 2-3, Feb., 1963.

— "Gujarati" in *Indian Literature since Independence.* ed., K. R. Srinivas Iyengar. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1973.

— *Shrunavantu* 'Listen.' Baroda: Botala, 1972.

Joshi, Umashankar. *Samsamvedan* 'Co-experience.' Bombay: Vora & Co., 1965.

Krishnamoorthy, K. *Kalidasa.* New York: Twayne Publishers, 1972.

Lindenberger, H. *Historical Drama.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975.

Majumdar, A. K. *Bhakti Renaissance.* Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1965.

— *Chalukyas of Gujarat.* Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1956.

Majumdar, R. C. ed. *The History and Culture of Indian People.* Vols. I (1951), II (1951), III (1954), IX (1965), X (1965). Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

Majumdar, R. C. and Altekar, A. S. *The Vakataka—Gupta Age.* Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1967.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Majumdar, R. C., Rayachaudhuri, H. C. and Datta, K. *An Advanced History of India.* London: Macmillan & Co., 1958.

Mehta, N. C. et al, eds. *Munshi: His Art and Work.* Bombay: Shri K. M. Munshi Diamond Jubilee Committee, 1947.

Merchant, W. M. *Comedy.* London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1972.

Millet, Fred and Bentley, G. E. *The Art of Drama.* New York: D. Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1935.

Mookerji R. K. *Ancient Indian Education.* London: Macmillan, 1947.

— *The Gupta Empire.* Bombay: Hind Kitabs, Ltd., 1947.

— "Women in Ancient India" in *Women of India,* ed. Tara Ali Baig. Delhi: Government of India Publication, 1958.

Munshi at Seventy-Five. Bombay: Dr. K. M. Munshi's 76th Birthday Celebrations Committee, 1962.

Nayak, R. S. and Patel, S. V. *Munshi Abhyasa: Jivan ane Sahitya* 'A study of Munshi: Life and Literature.' Ahmebad: Annada Book Depot, 1967.

Nicoll Allardyce. *The Theater and Dramatic Theory.* London: George G. Harrap & Co., Ltd. 1962.

Organ, T. W. *Hinduism.* New York: Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 1974.

Ortega Y Gasset, Jose. *The Dehumanization of Art.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968, copyright 1948.

Pandeya, R. *Prasad ki Natyakala* (Hindi) 'Dramatic Art of Prasad.' Kanpur; Anusandhan Prakashan, 1965.

Pandya, N. I. *Madhyakalin Gujarati Sahityaman Tatvavichar* 'Philosophical Thought in Medieval Gujarati Literature. Bombay: Ashok Prakashan, 1968.

Pandya, S. ed. *Chandrashankar na Gadya-ratno* 'Prose-gems of Chandrashankar.' Bombay: N. M. Tripathi, 1966.

Parekh, Madhusudan. *Avirbhava* 'Manifestations.' Ahmedabad: Abhinava Prakashan, 1973.

— *Kanaiyalal Munshi: Sahitya, Jivan ane Pratibha* 'Kanaiyalal Munshi: Literature, Life and Personality.' Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1967.

Parekh, Nagindas. *Svadhyaya ane Samiksha* 'Study and Criticism.' Bombay: Vora & Co., 1969.

Parikh, Leena. *Munshi ni Navalkathaona Streepatro* 'Female Characters in Munshi's Novels.' Ahmedabad: Bharat Prakashan, 1964.

Parikh, Rasiklal. *Purovachan ane Vivechan* 'Preview and Critique.' Ahmedabad: Gurjar Granth Ratna Karyalaya 1965.

Patel, N. and Patel E. J. *Kanaiyalal Munshi: Vyaktitva ane Vangmaya* 'Kanaiyalal Munshi: Personality and Literature.' Surat: Gajanan Karyalaya, 1966.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Patel, Ramanbhai I. *The Novels of Munshi.* Surat: Chunilal Gandhi Vidya Bhavan, 1959.

Pathak, R. V. *Akalan* 'Comprehension.' Ahmedabad: Gurjar Granth Ratna Karyalaya, 1964.

Philips, C. H. *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon.* New York: Macmillan, 1961.

Prasad, Jayashankar. *Dhruvasvamini* (Hindi). Allahabad: Bharati Bhandar Leader Press, 15th ed. 1967, 1st ed. 1935.

Pritchett, V. S. *The Living Novel.* London: Chatto & Windus, 1967, copyright 1946.

Prusek, J. gen. ed., *Dictionary of Oriental Literatures* Vol. II, New York: Basic Books, 1974.

Raval, Anantrai. *Samalochana* 'A Review.' Bombay: R. R. Sheth, 1966.

— *Taratamya* 'Extracts.' Ahmedabad: Gurjar Granth Ratna Karyalaya, 1971.

Raval, R. M. *Munshi's World of Imagination.* Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1962.

Sarma, D. S. *Hinduism Through the Ages.* Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1956.

Shah, R. C. *Narsi Purve nun Gujarati Sahitya* 'Gujarati Literature before Narsi.' Bombay: Parichaya Trust, 1976.

Shastri, D. *Apani Sanskriti nan Ketalak Vaheno* 'Some Currents in Our Culture.' Bombay: 'Vile Parle Sahitya Sabha, 1952.

Sorell, Walter. *Facets of Comedy.* New York: Grosset and Dunlop, 1972.

Srinivas Iyengar, K. R. *Indian Literature Since Independence.* Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1973.

Thaker, Dhirubhai. *Gujarati Sahitya ni Vikas Rekha* Vol. I & II 'An Outline of the Development of Gujarati Literature.' Surat: Popular Book Depot, 1954.

— *Samprat Sahitya* 'Contemporary Literature.' Surat: Popular Prakashan, 1968.

— *Vikshepa* 'Interruptions.' Ahmedabad: Abhinav Prakashan, 1973.

Thompson, A. R. *The Anatomy of Drama.* New York: Books for Libraries Press, Inc., 1946.

Trivedi, H. C. *Cultural and Linguistic Problems in Translation.* Ahmedabad: The New Order Book Co., 1971.

Vaidya, V. *Gujarati Sahitya ni Ruparekha* Vol. I & II 'An Outline of Gujarati Literature.' Ahmedabad: Ravani Prakashan, 1965.

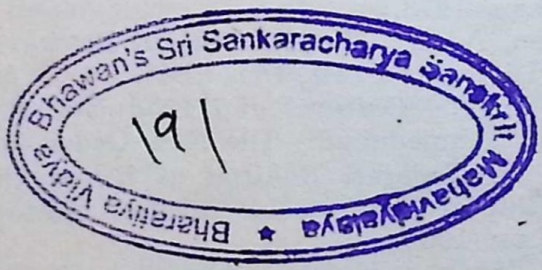
— *Jui ane Ketaki.* Ahmedabad: Gurjar Granth Ratna Karyalaya, 1963.

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Vakil, R. *Gujarati Bhasha ane Sahitya ni Ruparekha* 'An Outline of Gujarati Language and Literature.' Bombay: The Modern School, 1938.

Van Buitenen, J. A. B. *Two Plays of Ancient India.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1968.

Wellek, R. and Warren A. *Theory of Literature.* New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1942.



Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai

Digitization by Arya Samaj Charitable Foundation, Chennai